



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



The Persian Letters

Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, C J Betts





*THE PERSIAN LETTERS: WITH
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES, AND
COMPLETELY RE-EDITED
FROM THE PERSIAN MANUSCRIPTS
BY J. QUIEU, LL. D. & C. L. E.*

LONDON
PRINTED BY R. S. CLAY, 1881
1881



**THE PERSIAN LETTERS: WITH
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES, NOW
COMPLETELY DONE INTO ENGLISH,
FROM THE ORIGINAL BY MONTES-
QUIEU, ^{Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède} IN ONE VOLUME.**

Les lettres persanes

**LONDON
PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY
1901**

PJ
440
.07
1901
40794
v.14

Copyright, 1897,
BY THE ATHENÆUM PUBLISHING Co.

CASHAN EDITION

Limited to One Thousand Copies

No. 562

PREFACE.

IN 1721 Montesquieu was thirty-two years old. He had been entered as counsellor in the parliament of Bordeaux in 1714; had married Mademoiselle Jeanne de Lartigues, who bore him three children; in the following year had become *président à mortier* in the same parliament, on the death of an uncle, in 1716; and had been now for five years a member of the Bordeaux Academy of Science, Belles-Lettres and Arts, established by letters patent on the 5th of September, 1712. He founded, during the year of his reception, a prize for anatomy, and read, at various sessions of the society, dissertations on the causes productive of echo, the renal glands, the weight and transparency of bodies, etc. He announced his intention of writing a physical history of the globe, and sent forth circulars throughout the scientific world inviting communications and memoirs on the subject, and expressing his willingness to pay for the expense of carriage. In the mean time, although he was equipping himself for the two works that were destined to render him immortal by writing

the *Politique des Romains dans la Religion*, the *Système des Idées* (1716), and the *Différence des Genies* (1717), he was not known as the author of any important literary production until the appearance of two little volumes entitled *Lettres persanes*, "which he did not own, but which he did not disown either." It is unnecessary to say that the paternity of these letters has never been seriously disputed.

The famous epigraph prefixed to the *Esprit des Lois* — *Prolem sine matre creatam* — cannot, however, be applied to them; indeed, it is doubtful if there ever has been an instance of spontaneous generation in literature, even in the case of a work of genius. It is probable that Montesquieu borrowed the first idea of the *Lettres persanes* from Addison's *Spectator*, or, perhaps, from some lines in Dufresny's *Amusements sérieux et comiques*.¹ His contemporaries had naturally no knowledge of his indebtedness to these writers; but they suspected him, on the other hand, of having had two collaborators, — Bel, a counsellor in the parliament, for the "sportive articles," and President Barbot for the "moral reflections." This imputation, which first received publicity in the Abbé Denina's *Prusse littéraire* (1790), had been already given expression to by the Marquis de Paulmy on the fly-leaf of his copy of the *Œuvres complètes*

¹ This work has been reprinted for the Cabinet du Bibliophile, Paris, Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1869, in — 16 (same shape as that of the present edition).

published in 1758. Reduced to its just value, the charge simply means that Montesquieu submitted his manuscript to the small number of literary friends with whom he was intimate at Bordeaux, and of these Bel and Barbot were the most distinguished. In any case, only the former can be credited with the honor of furnishing some hints which Montesquieu might have turned to account. Bel was by no means unwilling to shirk the duties of his office. He was frequently in Paris, where he published, besides various satirical pamphlets on Voltaire, La Motte-Houdart, and Moncrif, a *Dictionnaire néologique* in co-operation with the Abbé Desfontaines, and where his life came to a close. Montesquieu, on the contrary, did not make his appearance in Paris before 1722. Of this period of his existence we know but little; and most of our knowledge is derived from the Abbé de Guasco, who annotated certain letters of the president written in the full maturity of his powers. These annotations were not published until twelve years after Montesquieu's death, and their accuracy is justly liable to suspicion. Has not the abbé asserted that the *Lettres persanes* were dashed off merely as an amusement? Others, and they are far nearer to the truth, affirm that the original manuscript contained passages erased four or five times. M. Vian has published three variants of the same billet-doux.

After the letters had been revised, corrected, and,

it is said, submitted to a learned Oratorian, Père Desmolets, who predicted that they would "sell like hot cakes," it was necessary to find a printer. Not a very long time ago, bibliographers, though they might admit that Pierre Marteau or Jean Nourse were something more than names, and judged that the volumes decorated with their fantastic rubrics had in reality come forth from the presses of Amsterdam, Cologne, or London. But now since a patient study of the typographical characters and ornaments has enabled certain scholars to demonstrate that in reality these same volumes had come forth from the presses of Rouen, Troye, Nancy, etc., a new field is thrown open to those investigators who are trying to reconstitute the too long neglected history of our provincial printing-presses. So a consummate bibliographer, M. A. Claudin, while engaged in editing the catalogue of the library of M. Rochebilière, has, by a laborious and minute collation, succeeded in proving that the first edition of the *Lettres persanes* saw the light neither on the Rhine nor on the Amstel, but in Rouen, like all the other editions that bear the name of *Pierre Brunel*. Is it not significant that three of our classical masterpieces, the *Lettres persanes*, the *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné* (1726), and the *Histoire de Charles XII.* (1731), should have been first printed in the presses of Rouen?

However, I have no intention of inviting the reader to the very arduous task of examining the bibliog-

raphy of the eight known editions, dated 1721, which were scattered over all literary Europe, and I shall return to one of those editions only on account of the part it played in the life of the author.

The success of the work was immediate and lasting, and Montesquieu was not chary of expressing his satisfaction at the popularity of his first production; but, in spite of the "prodigious sale," of which he speaks with evident pleasure, it is rather strange that there should not have been a single new edition for eight years afterwards, for we have yet to see a copy bearing the date between 1722 and 1729. The veto with which, according to Malesherbes, Cardinal Dubois, out of his excessive regard for modesty, tried to diminish its circulation, would surely not have hurt the sale of pirated editions; the very contrary was likely to be the case.

Public opinion designated Montesquieu as the occupant of the first chair vacant in the French Academy. Madame de Tencin had received him among her "bêtes" on his arrival in Paris, and was now quarrelling for the possession of him with Madame de Lambert. Both ladies were influential enough to be of material assistance to him in his candidature. He published, without letting his name appear, the *Temple de Gnide*, read in certain houses his *Voyage à Paphos*, and allowed the *Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eucrate* to be printed in the *Mercure de France*; but the author of the *Lettres persanes*

could not be suffered to triumph, and he failed in his first attempt, notwithstanding the support he had received, on the ground that one of the statutes of the Academy forbade the election of a non-resident member. He had been sure of victory, nor was he alone in his belief: Fontenelle had, in fact, composed the reply which it was his duty to deliver on the occasion of the reception as director; his manuscript fell later on into the hands of M. de Secondat, who mislaid it.

Furious at his failure, Montesquieu returned home and sold his presidentship; then he settled in Paris, and waited for another opportunity of achieving the coveted distinction. This was soon to be afforded him by the death of the avocat Louis de Sacy, the oracle of the salon of Madame de Lambert, on the 26th of October, 1726. The Abbé Dubos, perpetual secretary, informed Cardinal Fleury, who was an Academician as well as prime minister, of the vacancy. "I have no personal preferences," the prelate replied the next day, "in favor of any candidate for the chair of M. de Sacy; I shall be perfectly satisfied with the choice of the majority, and all I desire is that the Academy may select the person most worthy of its suffrages. I believe that M. de Montesquieu has offered himself, but I have entered into no engagement with him, nor do I intend supporting any candidate on the present occasion." After so plain a declaration of neutrality, the success

of Montesquieu seemed assured, especially as he was the only candidate; but he had reckoned without the rancor of Père Tournemine; he had offended him by his somewhat disdainful refusal to continue his attendance at the reunions of the Abbé Oliva, librarian to the Prince de Soubise, where the Jesuit monopolized the conversation and, perhaps, posed unconsciously for the picture of the "universal dogmatist" in the *Lettres persanes*. We have it on the authority of the Abbé de Guasco that it was the Père Tournemine who brought to the attention of the Cardinal "a very faithful extract" from the *Lettres*, in which doubtless figured, among other quotations, the passages where the King persuades his people that "paper is money" and the Pope demonstrates to the King that "three are one" and "the bread which he eats is not bread" (Letter XXIV.). Probably this was the reason why a sufficient number of members was not present on the 11th of December, the day on which the voting was to take place, and the election had to be adjourned to the 20th of the same month. During the interval an unexpected competitor appeared in the person of the avocat Mathieu Marais, who was supported by the Abbé d'Olivet and by President Bouhier. The danger was serious. Montesquieu obtained an audience from the Cardinal. Both of them have been reticent as to what occurred on that occasion. All we know is that Fleury wrote to the director,

intimating his consent to the election of the president, after the explanations the latter had given him. Two days afterwards, Montesquieu received a plurality of the votes; Marais had at least two votes, doubtless those of his sponsors. A new ballot was necessary, which was appointed for the 5th of January, and Cardinal de Fleury wrote another letter to the director. "It seems to me," he wrote from Marly, "that your method of drawing up the register is very precise and sagacious. There are certain things which it is best not to enter into too deeply because of the consequences that may result from them, and because in such a case there is danger of saying too much or too little. The submission of M. le Président de Montesquieu has been so thorough that the use of any language calculated to injure his reputation in the slightest degree would do him a serious injustice, and every one is so well informed of what has passed that no inconvenience can arise from the silence which the Academy ought to maintain.

"This is simply the expression of my opinion; I do not claim any authority in the matter. Nothing, indeed, could be farther from my thoughts than the idea of speaking as a judge on matters which are entirely under the jurisdiction of the Academy. But I cannot help thinking that, as a rule, the safest plan is always to anticipate and remove the causes of ill-feeling."

After such a pronouncement the Academy had nothing to do but to give way. Montesquieu was elected on the very same day. When we have said that he read his address at his reception on the 24th of January; that Jean Roland Malet, the director appointed for the ceremony, replied by a speech which contained the usual eulogies tempered by the not unusual malicious reservations; and that, shortly afterward, Montesquieu began his protracted tours through Italy, Germany, and Italy,—we have borrowed all the facts from his biography that it is important to recall under the present circumstances.

Nevertheless, we cannot dismiss the subject without referring to the most singular circumstance of all connected with his election, and asking what was at the bottom of Fleury's sudden change of opinion. The contemporaries of the illustrious writer have left us the choice of six different explanations. According to his son, Montesquieu declared that he did not acknowledge the *Lettres persanes*, but that he would not disclaim their authorship either; if we are to believe the Chevalier de Solignac, secretary of the Académie de Stanislas at Nancy, the Cardinal, after reading the book, pronounced it more amusing than dangerous; Maupertuis opines that the talent of Montesquieu as a reader won him his cause; D'Alembert insinuates that certain apochryphal letters had been slipped in among the real ones; Voltaire asserts that a new edition had been printed in a few days,

and that everything a cardinal or a minister would be inclined to condemn had been toned down in this edition or entirely omitted; and Soulavie only modifies a certain detail by claiming that Montesquieu introduced some *Cartons*¹ into the copy offered to Fleury.

"Voltaire," says Beuchot, "is the only author that mentions this edition, but we must not on that account conclude that the anecdote is false. Voltaire had access to many private sources of information with regard to contemporary facts."

There does exist an edition—of which Beuchot had no knowledge—bearing this characteristic subtitle: SECONDE ÉDITION, REVUE, CORRIGÉE, DIMINUÉE ET AUGMENTÉE PAR L'AUTEUR; à Cologne, chez Pierre Marteau, 1721, 2 vol. petit in—12 de 312 et 347 p.; titre rouge et noir. Now this "seconde édition Marteau," as the bibliographers designate it, has a hundred and forty letters instead of a hundred and fifty, and, furthermore, many of these letters contain omissions and passages that have been softened down. But these latter have not the importance which M. Vian attached to them when he first discovered what he thought was the only copy in existence,—a second has since been found in the Arsenal by M.

¹ Leaves substituted for others containing phrases or words disagreeable to the government. Their presence ordinarily indicates that the book has been submitted to the censorship, and that it required changes before it could be allowed to appear; it is frequently the proof, or first, edition.

André Lefèvre. The dialogue of Rica and the blind man of the Quinze-Vingt (XXXII.), the struggle of Pharan with the eunuchs who try to enroll him in their confraternity against his will (XLI.-XLIII.), the advice of Usbek to his wives (LXV.), their trip into the country (XLVII.), the outrage inflicted by Suphis on Soliman (LXX.), must have been modified for purely literary reasons. If the fact that we do not find in the new text "the Virgin who gave birth to twelve prophets," and the "three who are one," has any significance, why does the author allow an allusion lower down to the Eucharist to stand which is quite as irreverent? How could the abbreviation R. P. J. for Révérend Père Jésuite, have rendered him any safer? In a word, does this famous "deuxième Marteau" reveal to us the real reason of the triumph which, according to some, Montesquieu won by such a Gascon trick?

Two objections, exclusively material, at once present themselves. How could Montesquieu have thought in 1721 of disconcerting the adversaries of a candidature which was not to take place until 1727? How could he have found time in the space of eight days—between the 11th and 20th of December—to send his corrections abroad, to get the proofs revised and to receive a copy just ready to his hand for his audience with the cardinal? If the "seconde Marteau" has been prepared in view of an election, it might naturally have been ante-

dated; M. Vian has been the more inclined to consider that this was the case, because he had discovered in the *Journal littéraire* of 1729 an account of this edition; but he forgot that this journal did not appear from 1723 to 1728, and the new editor had to liquidate his rather long arrears. As to the hasty and stealthy reprinting of a first volume — and it is a noticeable fact that the second volume contains no modifications or omissions — it would not appear so impossible if it were admitted that the new edition was printed in France and not in Holland. Now M. Claudin holds for certain that this “seconde édition, revue, corrigée, diminuée” is Dutch. It must, therefore, have been the one which Montesquieu’s secretary, the Abbé Duval, supervised, and to which the president alludes in the postscript of a letter to M. de Caupos; though this letter is not dated, certain passages enable us to assign it to 1721 or 1722: “I am informed by a person in Holland that the second edition of the L. P. is about to appear with some corrections.”

“I am afflicted,” he wrote later on, “with the disease of writing books, and also with the disease of being ashamed of them when I have them written.” These scruples must have been peculiarly keen with regard to his first work, and there is nothing improbable in his having set about correcting the text immediately after it appeared. As to the nature of the corrections, some are such as a

writer might consider needed to contribute to the perfection of his work, their value depending entirely on his own judgment; others do not at all imply the retraction which the orthodoxy of the prime minister required. Nevertheless, it must have been a copy of this second edition that Montesquieu had in his pocket on the day of his audience, and he doubtless asked his Eminence's permission to read a few pages of it; the Cardinal, charmed by the diction, may have declared them "more amusing than dangerous," and they parted on the best terms. Such is the most plausible denouement of the bibliographic comedy, whose real secret has perhaps been sleeping for a century and a half among the archives of the château of La Brède.

If the genesis of the book is obscure, its plan, aim, and influence can be summarized with the greatest ease.

Three Persians — Rica, Usbek, and Rhedi, — set out for Europe to study its manners and institutions. Rhedi stops at Venice, while Rica and Usbek push on to Paris. Very soon after their departure there is a brisk interchange of letters between Usbek and his wives Zachi, Zephis, Fatme, Roxana, and the eunuchs, as well as between the three travellers and the friends they have left at Ispahan. Soon disorders break out in the seraglio of Usbek; the eunuchs try to restore discipline by inflicting on one of the favorites, Zachi, "that punishment which begins by shocking one's

modesty and takes one back to the time of her childhood." Roxana, another favorite, poisons herself, and then bids an ironical farewell to the master she has deceived. "At the present day," says Sainte-Beuve, "this part of the book seems to us cold and artificial; indeed, it would become utterly wearisome, if it were longer." This was certainly not the opinion of Montesquieu's contemporaries, and there can be no stronger evidence of the fact than the numberless imitations by which the *Lettres persanes* was succeeded. The attraction of the East for European imaginations dates from the Crusades, and has never ceased since. Without going farther back than the seventeenth century, the travels of Tavernier, Chardin, and Paul Lucas, the translation of the Thousand and One Nights by Galland, the residence of a Persian ambassador at Paris in 1715 and of a Turkish one in 1721, the visit of the Czar Peter I. to the little King Louis XV., excited or revived a curiosity which the literary men and women of Paris were not shy of turning to account. Madame de Villedieu had published her *Mémoires du sérail* long before, and Madame de Gomez' *Anecdotes ou Histoire secrète de la Maison ottomane* appeared about the same time, to be soon followed by her *Anecdotes persanes*. Saint-Foix was a still more resolute imitator, and his *Lettres d'une Turque à Paris écrites à sa sœur au sérail* had the honor of being reprinted conjointly with the book they cer-

tainly did no credit to. Did not Montesquieu make allusion to this circumstance when he observed "that a sequel is inadmissible, and that any admixture with the letters of others, however ingenious such letters may be, is still more so"? The floodgates once opened, there is a deluge: the *Lettres juives* and *Lettres chinoises* of D'Argens, the *Mémoires turcs* of Godard d'Ancourt, the *Cousin de Mahomet* of Fromaget, the *Mille et un quarts d'heure* of Gueullette, etc., etc., are drawn from the same source from which Crébillon the younger will not disdain to take his *Sopha* and his *Tanzai*, Diderot his *Bijoux indiscrets*, and even Voltaire his *Lettres d'Amabeb*.

If the *Lettres persanes* had to depend on the superannuated framework of the story, they would have at the present day but a slight interest; but when the faded frame disappears the picture itself is found to be without blemish, and to be one of those masterpieces that defy the assaults of time.

There are several causes which account for the high rank the *Lettres persanes* occupies. In the first place the language has not become more antiquated than that of the *Neveu de Rameau* and *Candide*; and it is always a piece of good fortune for a work of genius to be able to dispense with a commentary. Then, the book attacks errors and vices that will last as long as humanity, and the latter will be very near

its last gasp when it ceases to insist that preceding generations were much superior to ours; and finally, it is universally acknowledged that the *Lettres persanes* inaugurated a struggle which still continues. "The eighteenth century," says Sainte-Beuve, "was not to confirm its incredulity by a slow process of induction, and to spell it out, as it were, word by word. The books of Doctor Launoy and Richard Simon were to remain very nearly strangers to it. The *Persian Letters* and Voltaire, these were the enemies that were approaching, these were the light troops that were to take possession of the heights, after the French fashion, without saying, By your leave! and who never could be dislodged afterwards." Marivaux shows, in the *Spectateur français*, 8^e feuille, that he foresaw the danger. "We should be careful," says he, "how we tamper with the mind of man who is connected with his duties by very weak ties, and no longer attaches importance to them if they are presented to him under a trivial light." Though he did not, like the Abbé Gaultier, author of the *Lettres persanes convaincues d'Impiété*, invoke the aid of the spiritual and even of the temporal power against such abominations, he would have cordially agreed with D'Argenson that "the work contains strokes a witty man might conceive, but a wise man would never print." The reader will decide the point according to his disposition, opinions, or prejudices; Montesquieu left him free to

do so when he wrote with good-natured irony:
"Certainly the nature and design of the *Persian
Letters* are so self-evident that they can never
deceive any except those who wish to deceive
themselves."

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PERSIAN LETTERS.

(1754)

NOTHING in the "Persian Letters" has given more pleasure than the unexpected revelation of the fact that they contained a kind of romance, the beginning, progress, and end of which can be perceived. The connection between the various characters is very close and very apparent. The longer they remain in Europe the less marvellous and strange do the customs of that part of the world seem to them, and the strange and marvellous aspect of what they see increases or diminishes in accordance with their several dispositions. On the other hand, the growth of the disorders in the Asiatic seraglio bear a relative proportion to the time of Usbek's absence; for this absence is in exact relation with the increase of delirium and the lessening of love.

Moreover, romances of this sort are generally successful, because the characters involved portray situations in which they were really and truly actors, and this gives the reader a conception which no mere description by an uninterested person could ever afford. We must attribute the success of certain charming works that have appeared since the "Persian Letters" to a similar cause.

In fine, in ordinary romances, digressions cannot be allowed, except these digressions form a new romance. Neither can arguments be introduced, because the characters did not come together for the purpose of arguing, and to do

so would be altogether out of harmony with the design and nature of the work. But in the form of letters, in which no selection is made of the actors, and in which the subjects treated do not depend on any previously formed design or plan, the author has had the advantage of being able to introduce philosophy, politics, and ethics into a romance, and to unite the whole by an unseen chain of a nature to some extent heretofore unknown.

The "Persian Letters" had such a prodigious sale when first published that publishers used every effort possible to obtain sequels to the work. They importuned every writer they met: "Write, I entreat you," they would say, "some 'Persian Letters' for me."

But what I have just remarked ought to be enough to show that a sequel is inadmissible, and that any admixture with the letters of others, however ingenious such letters may be, is still more so.

Many persons have objected to the audacious character of certain observations; I would entreat such persons to have regard to the nature of the work itself. The Persians who naturally play so great a rôle in it, are on a sudden transplanted into Europe, into another world as it were. There was a time, therefore, when it was necessary to represent them as filled with ignorance and prejudice, the intention being simply to unfold the generation and progress of their ideas. Their first thoughts must have been singular, and surely it was the writer's duty to reproduce this singularity in the liveliest and most spirited manner he could; for this purpose, he had to paint the feeling excited in their minds by things which to them appeared extraordinary. So far was he from imagining that he had treated any principle of our religion lightly that he never suspected he could be charged even with imprudence. Such observations will be

3.

always found connected with feelings of surprise and astonishment, and not with any idea of investigation, still less of criticism. Surely these Persians ought not to be made to appear better informed as to our religion than they were as to our manners and customs ; and if they sometimes find our dogmas singular, this circumstance merely proves their ignorance of the relation which these dogmas have to other truths.

This justification is advanced by the author, as well on account of his love for these great truths as on account of his respect for the human race, whose tenderest feelings he would certainly never think of wounding. The reader, then, is entreated to consider, always and in all cases, the observations to which I allude as the effects of surprise in people who ought to be surprised, or as paradoxes made by men who were in no condition to make paradoxes. He is also entreated to reflect that the whole charm of the work consists in the perpetual contrast between existing things and the singular, artless, or odd manner in which they are perceived. Certainly, the nature and design of the "Persian Letters" are so self-evident that they can never deceive any except those who wish to deceive themselves.

INTRODUCTION.

(1721.)

THIS is not a dedication, nor do I ask any protection for my book : it will be read, if it is good ; and I do not care that it should be read, if it is bad. I have issued these first letters in order to test the taste of the public ; I have a large number of others in my portfolio which I may issue hereafter.

Should I do so, however, it must be on condition that I remain unknown ; the moment my name becomes public property, I stop writing. I am acquainted with a lady who walks well enough, but limps as soon as any one turns his eye on her. The defects of my work are numerous enough without having those of my person added to them. If it were known who I am, persons might say : "His book is inconsistent with his character ; he could have made a better use of his time ; this is unworthy of an earnest man." Critics are never at a loss for such reflections, because they can always be made without calling for the exercise of any noticeable capacity.

The Persians who wrote these letters were my guests, and we spent our time together. As they regarded me as a man belonging to another world, they concealed nothing from me. In fact, people transplanted from such a distance could no longer have any secrets. They communicated most of their letters to me ; I copied them. I even succeeded in getting possession of some which they assuredly would never have dreamed of making me acquainted with, these letters being so mortifying to Persian vanity and jealousy.

I am, then, simply a translator ; my sole difficulty consisted in harmonizing the work with our manners. I have spared the reader, as far as I could, the extravagance of Asiatic diction, and have saved him from an infinite number of sublime expressions that would have driven him crazy.

Nor is this all I have done for him. I have abridged the prolix compliments, of which the Orientals are quite as prodigal as ourselves ; and I have struck out a great many insignificant details which might amuse a couple of friends, but could hardly survive the light of publicity. If most of those who have given us collections of letters had done the same, there would have been little left of their works.

There is one thing that has often astonished me : namely, that those Persians were sometimes as well informed as myself as to the manners and customs of the nation. This knowledge of theirs often extended to the most delicate matters, and embraced circumstances which, I am quite sure, have entirely escaped the attention of those Germans who have travelled in France. I attribute this to their long residence among us, not to mention the fact that it is easier for an Asiatic to become acquainted with the habits of the French in a year than it is for a Frenchman to become acquainted with the habits of the Asiatics in four, because the latter are as reticent as the former are communicative.

Usage allows every translator, and even every barbarous commentator, to adorn the beginning of his version or of his annotation with a panegyric on the original, proclaiming its utility, merit, and excellence. I have not done so, and the motives of my forbearance can be very easily guessed. One of the best of these motives is that such a proceeding on my part would render additionally irksome that which is irksome enough in itself, — a preface.

PERSIAN LETTERS.

LETTER I.

USBEEK TO HIS FRIEND RUSTAN

AT ISPAHAN.

WE remained only one day at Koum. When we had performed our devotions at the tomb of the virgin who gave birth to twelve prophets, we resumed our journey, and we arrived at Tauris on yesterday, the twenty-fifth day since our departure from Ispahan. Rica and myself are perhaps the first Persians whom a love of knowledge has driven from their country, and who have renounced the pleasures of a quiet life in order to toil painfully in search of wisdom.

We were born in a flourishing realm, but we did not believe that its boundaries should circumscribe our knowledge, and that the light of the East should alone enlighten us.

Let me know what is said of our journey; do not flatter me: I do not expect that many will approve of it. Address your letter to Erzeroum, where I intend remaining for some time. Adieu, my dear Rustan. Rest assured that, in whatever part of the world I am, you have there a faithful friend.

TAURIS, the 15th of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

LETTER II.

USBEK TO THE FIRST BLACK EUNUCH

AT HIS SERAGLIO IN ISPAHAN.

You are the faithful guardian of the fairest women in Persia ; I have confided to you all that is dearest to me in the world ; you hold in your hands the keys of those fatal doors that open for none but me. As long as you watch over this precious treasure of my heart, it enjoys perfect repose and security. You are on guard during the silence of the night as well as during the uproar of the day. Your indefatigable care supports virtue when it totters. If the women whom you guard should wish to transgress the limit of their duty, you would immediately destroy their hopes of doing so successfully. You are the scourge of vice and the pillar of fidelity.

You command and you obey them. You execute blindly all their wishes, and, at the same time, compel them to be subservient to the laws of the seraglio ; it is your glory to render them the vilest services ; you submit with respect and fear to their lawful orders ; you serve them as the slave of their slaves. But no sooner do you find cause to dread any relaxation of the laws of chastity and modesty than you resume the supreme authority you have derived from me, and speak as a master.

Always remember the abject condition from which I ~~raised you, when you were the meanest of my slaves,~~ in order to place you in your present position and intrust you with the guardianship of the delights of my heart. Humble yourself to the dust in presence of those who share my love ; but make them at the same time feel their utter helplessness. ~~Procure for them every pleasure that is innocent ; cheat them out of their anxieties ; amuse them with music, dancing,~~

and delicious drinks ; persuade them to meet one another often. If they desire to go into the country, you may conduct them thither ; but lay hands on any man who comes into their presence. Exhort them to cleanliness, which is the image of purity of soul ; speak to them sometimes of me. I wish I could again see them in that charming spot which they adorn. Adieu.

TAURIS, the 18th of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

LETTER III.

ZACHI TO USBEK

AT TAURIS.

WE have ordered the chief of the eunuchs to conduct us into the country ; he will tell you that no accident occurred to us. When we were obliged to cross the river and therefore abandon our litters, we entered boxes, according to the usual custom ; two slaves carried us on their shoulders, and we escaped being seen by anybody.

How can I exist, dear Usbek, in your seraglio at Ispahan !— a spot that, by recalling my vanished pleasures unceasingly, adds every day fresh fuel to my violent passions. I wander from apartment to apartment, ever seeking and never finding thee, and meeting at every turn the cruel memory of a happiness that has fled. At one time I behold myself in that place where, for the first time in my life, I received thee into my arms ; at another, in the room where the famous dispute between thy wives was decided by thy wisdom. Each of us claimed to be superior to her fellow in beauty. We appeared before you, bedecked with all the ornaments and jewels that our fancy could form an idea of. You viewed with pleasure the miracles of our art ;

the lengths to which we had gone on account of our ardent desire to please you excited your admiration. But you soon compelled those borrowed charms to yield to more natural graces; you ruined the effect of all our efforts; we had to get rid of those ornaments of which you had now become weary; we had to appear before you in the simplicity of nature. I cared nothing for modesty, I thought only of victory. Happy Usbek! what charms did thy gaze encounter then! Long did you wander from enchantment to enchantment; long did your wavering soul recoil from making a choice; each new grace demanded a tribute, and in a moment you devoured each one of us with kisses; your inquisitive eyes inspected the most hidden recesses; you made us assume a thousand different postures, and every fresh command was met by fresh obedience. Let me confess it, Usbek, a passion far more vehement than ambition excited me to try to please you. Gradually I saw that I might become the mistress of your heart; you took me, left me, and returned to me again; I was able to retain your affection. I triumphed, and my rivals despaired. We two felt as if we were alone in the world: all that was around us was unworthy of our attention. Would to Heaven that my rivals had had the courage to remain witnesses of all the marks of affection I received from thee! Had they beheld our transports, they would have known the difference between my love and theirs; they would have seen that, although they might rival me in charms, they could not rival me in sensibility. — But where am I wandering? Where have these vain details led me? Not to be loved is a misfortune, but to be abandoned is an — outrage. You leave us, Usbek, and roam through barbarous lands. What! do you consider there is no advantage in being loved? Alas! you do not even know what you are losing! The sighs I heave are not heard; the tears I shed you cannot enjoy. Every heart in the seraglio beats with love for you, and your

1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.

1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.
1. 1. 1.



insensibility is ever carrying you farther away from us ! Ah ! dear Usbek, if you only knew how to be happy !

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 21st of the moon of Maharram, 1711.

LETTER IV.

ZEPHIS TO USBEK

AT ERZEROUH.

AT length that black monster has resolved to drive me to despair. Nothing can prevent him from depriving me of my slave Zelida, Zelida who serves me with such affection, and whose deft fingers add new graces and charms to my person. That this separation should be painful to me does not content him ; he wishes to render it dishonorable to me as well. The traitor pretends to regard the motives of my confidence in her as criminal ; and because to stand behind the door, where I always insist on his remaining, fatigues him, he dares to assert that he has heard or seen things which I cannot even imagine. What an unfortunate being I am ! Neither the solitude in which I live nor my virtue can shelter me from his extravagant suspicions ; a vile slave attacks me in your heart, and I must defend myself there ! No, I have too much respect for myself to condescend to justify my actions. I will have no guarantee of my conduct except myself, your love and mine, and if there be any need of saying so, dear Usbek, my tears.

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 29th of the moon of Maharram, 1711.

LETTER V.

RUSTAN TO USBEK

AT ERZEROUH.

EVERY one in Ispahan is speaking about you ; your departure is the topic of general conversation ; some attribute it to levity, others to some severe affliction ; your friends are the only people who defend you, but they can get no one to share their opinion, for no one can understand why you should abandon country, wives, relations, and friends for the purpose of seeing lands unknown to the Persians. The mother of Rica is inconsolable ; she asks you to restore to her the son whom, she asserts, you have robbed her of. As far as I am personally concerned, my dear Usbek, I feel naturally inclined to approve of everything you do. Still, I cannot pardon your absence, nor does it matter how good your reasons for it may be, my heart can never sanction them. However, you must always give me a place in your regards.

ISPAHAN, the 28th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1711.

LETTER VI.

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND NESSIR

AT ISPAHAN.

AFTER travelling a whole-day from Erivan, we left Persia, and entered the territory which owns the sway of the Turk. Twelve days after, we reached Erzeroum, where we remained three or four months.

I must confess, Nessir, I felt an inward pang when I lost sight of Persia and found myself among the treacherous Osmanli; and the further I advanced into the land of these heathens, the more of a heathen I seemed to become myself. My country and family and friends rose up before my imagination; my affections awoke; I became troubled and restless, and saw at last that I had undertaken an enterprise which imperilled my peace of mind.

But what afflicts my heart most grievously is the thought of my wives. Every time my mind goes back to them my sorrow becomes more poignant.

And yet, Nessir, it is not that I love them: I discover in myself an insensibility in this respect which is incompatible with desire. In the crowded seraglio where I lived, I anticipated love; its very fruition destroyed it; but my very coldness is the source of a secret and devouring jealousy. I see a band of women left almost entirely to themselves, and the only persons responsible for them are a few base creatures. Even if my slaves were faithful, I could hardly feel secure; how will it be if they are not faithful? What sad news may not reach me in those distant lands I am about to traverse! This is an evil for which my friends cannot supply a remedy, a problem whose gloomy secrets they must not investigate; and, in any case, what aid could they afford? Would I not a thousand times prefer to let such crimes remain unpunished in obscurity rather than that their correction should become a subject of public gossip? I lay bare my sorrows before you, dear Nessir; it is the only consolation I have in my present situation.

ERZEROUH, the 10th of the moon of Rebiab 2, 1711.

LETTER VII.

FATME TO USBEK

AT ERZEROUH.

It is now two months since you left us, my dear Usbek, and I cannot persuade myself, in the depressed condition in which I am, that such is the case. I run into every room in the seraglio, as if you might be there ; I cannot rid me of this beguiling fancy. What do you wish to be the fate of a woman who loves you, who has been accustomed to hold you in her arms, whose sole care was to give you proofs of her affection ; a woman free by birth, but enslaved by the violence of her love ?

When I married you my eyes had not yet beheld the features of a man, and you are still the only man whom I have been permitted to behold ; for I reckon not among men those hideous eunuchs, whose least imperfection is that they are not men. When I compare your beauty with their deformity, I cannot help thinking how fortunate I am ; my imagination forms no more enchanting picture than that of the enrapturing charms of your person. I swear to you, Usbek, that though I had free leave to quit this place in which the nature of my position confines me ; though I could escape the guards who surround me ; though I were at liberty to choose a partner among all the men who live in this capital of nations, — I swear to you, Usbek, you alone should be my choice. You alone are the only man in the world worthy to be loved.

Think not that your absence has led me to neglect that beauty which you hold so dear ; although I must not be seen by any one, and although the ornaments wherewith I decorate my person are useless, as far as your happiness is concerned, I continue, nevertheless, to utilize every contrivance

calculated to render me pleasing, and never retire to my couch until I have been perfumed with the choicest essences I recall the happy time when I clasped you in my arms ; a flattering and seductive dream shows me the dear object of my love, and my fancy cheats itself with delusive hopes, and is lost in unavailing desires ; sometimes I think that you are disgusted with your wearisome journeys and about to return to us ; the night is passed in dreams that belong neither to waking nor to slumber ; I seek for you at my side, and you seem to fly from me ; at last the fire that burns within me dissipates these delusions and recalls me to myself. Then my excitement is so great — You may not believe it, Usbek, but it is impossible for me to live in my present condition ; fire courses through my veins. Why cannot I express to you what I feel so deeply ; and how is it that I feel so deeply what I cannot express ? At these moments, Usbek, for a kiss from thee I would surrender the empire of the universe. How hapless the lot of a woman who has such violent desires and yet is deprived of the society of the only person who can satisfy them ! Left to herself, with nothing to preoccupy her mind, her whole life is spent in sighs and in the delirium of exasperated passion. Far from being happy herself, she has not even the advantage of being subservient to the happiness of another ; a useless ornament of the seraglio, she is kept for the honor of her spouse, not for his felicity !

—You men are very cruel ! You are delighted that we should have desires which we cannot satisfy ; you treat us as if we were destitute of susceptibility, though you would be very sorry if such were the case ; you think that our passions, so long mortified, will be excited as soon as you appear. Yet it is not so easy for a man to gain our love ; the shortest way is to obtain from our constitutional disposition that which you would never venture to hope obtaining through your own merit.

Farewell, my dear Usbek, farewell. Be assured that I only live to adore you ; your image fills my soul ; and your absence, far from making me forget you, would render my love more impassioned, if that were possible.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 12th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1711.

LETTER VIII.

USBEC TO HIS FRIEND RUSTAN

AT ISPAHAN.

YOUR letter was given to me at Erzeroum, where I am at present. I suspected my departure would create considerable excitement, but that gives me little concern : which would you have me accept as a guide, — the foresight of my enemies or my own ?

From my earliest years I frequented the court. I can assert with truth that my heart was not corrupted by it : I adopted a great resolution, I dared to be virtuous even in a court. Not content with avoiding vice when I recognized it, I sometimes approached and unmasked it. I carried truth to the foot of the throne : there I spoke a language unheard of before ; I disconcerted flattery, and astonished the idolaters and their idol at the same time.

But when I saw that my sincerity made me enemies, that I aroused the jealousy of the ministers without gaining the favor of the prince, and that, in a corrupted court, my sole support was my own unaided virtue, I determined to withdraw. I feigned a great devotion to science, and, by dint of feigning, acquired a real love for it. I ceased to meddle with affairs, and retired to a house in the country. But even this line of conduct had its disadvantages : I continued to be exposed to the malice of my enemies,

while I had abandoned the means of parrying their assaults. Certain secret warnings induced me to think seriously of my situation; I resolved to become an exile from my native land, and my retirement from court furnished me with a plausible pretext. I went to the king; I made him acquainted with my desire to become familiar with the sciences of the West; I insinuated that my travels might be productive of utility to the state; I found favor in his eyes; I started on my journey, and so robbed my enemies of a victim.

And now, Rustan, you have the real cause of my travels. Let Ispahan talk; do not speak in my defence except to those that love me. Let my enemies interpret my action in the way their malice dictates: I am too happy at the thought that this is the only harm they can do me to mind them.

I am a subject of conversation for the moment; perhaps I shall only be too soon forgotten, and that my friends—No, Rustan, I will not give way to these sad thoughts: I will be always dear to them; I reckon on their fidelity as I do on yours.

ERZEROU, the 20th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER IX.

THE FIRST EUNUCH TO IBBI

AT ERZEROU.

You follow your old master in his travels; you traverse provinces and kingdoms; sorrow can make no impression on you; every instant brings new objects before your eyes: all that you see amuses you and makes you oblivious to the flight of time.

It is not the same with me: confined in a frightful prison, I am always surrounded by the same objects and devoured

by the same regrets. I groan under the crushing burden of the cares and anxieties of fifty years ; and during the course of a protracted life I can safely say that never have I known an unclouded day or a tranquil moment.

When my first master formed the cruel design of intrusting me with the care of his wives, and forced me by seductive promises, supported by a thousand threats, to surrender my manhood forever, I reckoned, weary as I was of the laborious employments incidental to my occupation, that ease and riches would compensate me for the sacrifice of my passions. Wretched creature that I was ! my mind, entirely possessed by illusions, showed me the gain and not the loss ! I hoped I should be delivered from the assaults of love by my inability to gratify its claims. Alas ! the effect of passion was extinguished, but not its cause ; and, far from being relieved, I found myself surrounded by objects that continually excited my desires. I entered the seraglio, where all that I saw inflamed my sorrow for what I had lost : every moment increased my agitation ; a thousand natural graces seemed to expand before my gaze, only to drive me to despair. To crown my misfortune, the happy man who owned all these treasures was never absent from my sight. During that time of distress, never did I conduct a woman to the bed of my master, never did I disrobe her, but that I retired to my apartments with rage in my heart and frightful despondency in my soul.

Thus passed the days of my miserable youth, myself my only confidant. I had to suffer in silence the grief and regret that overwhelmed me, and those same women whom I was tempted to gaze upon with eyes of tenderness, became now the objects of my stern and austere glances. Had they been able to penetrate my feelings, I should have been ruined ; what an advantage over me would not such knowledge have given them !

I remember one day, when I was placing a lady in the

bath, I was so transported with excitement that I entirely lost self-control, and dared to lay my hand on a forbidden spot. No sooner did reflection resume its sway than I thought I had seen my last day. I was fortunate enough, however, to escape a death of torture ; but the beauty to whom I had revealed my weakness made me pay dearly for her silence : I lost all authority over her entirely, and she has since compelled me to connive at caprices that have again and again endangered my life.

Well, at length the fires of youth have become extinct ; I am old, and my condition in this regard is tranquil ; I regard all women with indifferent eyes, and all the contumely and mortifications they have made me endure, I now repay with interest. I never lose sight of the fact that I was born to command them, and on every occasion when I do command them, it seems to me as if I had become a man once more. I hate them ever since I have been able to look upon them dispassionately ; and my recovered reason enables me to discover all their weaknesses. Although ~~I guard them for another, the pleasure of making them obey me fills my heart with a secret joy ; when~~ I deprive them of some indulgence in which their senses take delight, I feel as if I were the sole arbiter of their pleasures, and this to me is the source of an indirect satisfaction : the seraglio is a little empire which I control, and my ambition, the only passion now left me, is to some degree contented. It gratifies me to note that everything depends on me, and that my presence can never be dispensed with ; I am perfectly willing to incur the hatred of all these women, for that very hatred strengthens me in the post I occupy. And my conduct shows them that I am not ungrateful for their dislike ; they find in me an obstacle to their most innocent pleasures, a barrier which they despair of crossing ; the plans they form I put a sudden stop to ; I am armed with refusals, I bristle with scruples ; such words as duty, virtue, chastity,

modesty are always on my lips. I drive them to despair by talking incessantly of the weakness of their sex and the authority of their master ; I bewail the necessity of the severity I am forced to use, and I act as if I would have them understand that my guiding motive was their own interest and the deep attachment I felt for them.

For all that, I meet with countless disagreeable incidents, and these vindictive women are ever on the lookout for the means of retaliating on me the evils I make them endure ; and sometimes they are able to take terrible vengeance. There is a constant fluctuation of authority and submission going on between us. They are always requiring the most humiliating services at my hands ; the contempt they affect for me is unexampled, and, without regard for my age, they force me to rise ten times during the night on account of the merest trifle ; I am constantly overwhelmed with directions and orders and fanciful employments ; apparently they take turns in harassing me, and their caprices succeed one another in due order. Often they find a delight in making me redouble my vigilance ; they confide to me things that have no existence : now it is that a young man has been seen prowling around the walls ; at another time, I am told that a strange noise has been heard, or that some one has received a letter. All this troubles me, and my trouble is to them an occasion of laughter. They are delighted to see me become my own tormentor. Sometimes they station me behind the door, and compel me to remain there day and night ; they are adepts in pretended faints, sicknesses, and terrors. They never fail in their search for some plan to make me miserable. On such occasions, there is nothing left for me but blind obedience and unlimited submission ; a refusal in the mouth of such a being as I am would be a thing unheard of, and if I showed the slightest reluctance in complying with their wishes, they would have the right to inflict such punishment on me as

they chose. I would rather lose my life, my dear Ibbl, than submit to such humiliation.

Nor is this all: I am never sure for a moment of my master's favor; his heart is the abode of the enemies who seek to ruin me; to them belong certain fractions of the twenty-four hours when I am not heard, when their master can refuse them nothing, when, in a word, I am always in the wrong. I conduct angry women to his bed: think you they are likely to take my part, or admit that it is they who are in the wrong? I have everything to fear from their tears and sighs, from their embraces and from their very pleasures. They are in the place of their triumphs; their charms are the most terrible weapon they can use against me; their present services efface all my past ones, and nothing can avail me with a master who is no longer himself.

How often have I laid me down in the full enjoyment of my master's favor and awakened disgraced! The day I was shamefully whipped around the seraglio, what had I done to merit such punishment? I left a woman in the arms of my master. As soon as she saw him inflamed, she shed torrents of tears; she complained, and graded her complaints so skilfully that they increased in proportion to the love she inspired. At such a critical moment, what could I do to vindicate my innocence? I was the victim of an amorous negotiation and of a treaty the clauses of which were sighs. Such, dear Ibbl, is the cruel situation in which I have always lived.

How fortunate you are! your duties consist in waiting on Usbek. It is easy for you to please him, and to retain his favor to the end of your days.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the last day of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

LETTER X.

MIRZA TO HIS FRIEND USBEK

AT ERZEROUH.

You alone could repay me for the absence of Rica, and none but Rica could console me for yours. You are missed, Usbek: you were the life of our company. How hard it must be to break the ties which the heart and the intellect have formed!

There is much discussion amongst us. Our disputes generally turn on moral questions. Yesterday, the subject of our arguments was whether men were rendered happy by the pleasures and gratification of the senses or by virtue. I have often heard it said that men are naturally virtuous, and that justice is as much a property of humanity as existence. Pray, explain to me what are your ideas on this question.

I have spoken to certain mollahs who drive me wild with their quotations from the Koran; for I have not spoken as a true believer, but as a man, a citizen, and the father of a family.

Farewell.

ISPAHAN, the last day of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

LETTER XI.

USBK TO MIRZA

AT ISPAHAN.

You renounce your own judgment in order to yield to mine; you even condescend to consult me, you believe me capable of instructing you. My dear Mirza, there is one thing which flatters me even more than your good opinion of me does; namely, the knowledge that your friendship for me is based on the view you take of my character.

In order to comply with your request, I do not feel that there is any necessity for me to adduce arguments of an abstract character. There are certain truths that must be made felt, rather than inculcated by any process of reasoning: the truths of morality, for instance. Possibly you may be more touched by the following story than by the most subtle philosophical analysis.

There formerly lived in Arabia a little tribe called the Troglodytes. They were the descendants of those Troglodytes of old who, if we are to believe historians, resembled beasts more than men. But the race of which I speak were not the counterparts of the lower animals; they were not shaggy like bears, they did not hiss, and they had two eyes; but they were so malignant and ferocious that no principle of justice or equity could abide in their hearts.

They were governed by a king of foreign origin, who, with the view of correcting their natural malice, treated them with severity; but they conspired against him, killed him and exterminated all the royal family.

Having brought about this catastrophe, they met for the purpose of choosing a government, and, after many dissensions, elected magistrates. These officials had hardly entered upon the duties of their charge when they became odious to the Troglodytes, and were massacred in turn.

Liberated from this new yoke, these people were swayed only by the savagery of their nature. All agreed to render obedience to nobody, and it was decided that each individual should attend to his own interests, without troubling his mind about those of his neighbor.

This resolution, which was adopted unanimously, was received with much favor by our Troglodytes. They said: "Why should I wear my life out working for persons in whom I do not take the slightest interest? I will think of myself solely. I will live happy. what concern of mine is it whether others are so or not? I will procure whatever is

necessary for my own well-being. If I succeed in this, it matters little to me how wretched the other Troglodytes may be."

When the month for sowing the seed arrived, each one said: "I shall till sufficient land to produce wheat for my personal needs, and no more; a larger quantity would be useless; I have no intention of working for nothing."

The land in this little kingdom was not all of the same nature: one portion of it was barren and mountainous, while another, which was low-lying, was watered by numerous streams. This year there was a drought of such severity that the high lands failed absolutely to produce anything; the low-lying lands, however, brought forth an abundant harvest, as it had been easy to irrigate them. In consequence of this, the people living in the mountains nearly all died of hunger, for their hard-hearted neighbors refused to share their crops with them.

The following year was very rainy; the mountainous lands gave evidence of extraordinary fertility, and the low lands were flooded. Again half the people were the victims of famine; these unfortunates found that others could be as unfeeling as they had been themselves.

One of the principal inhabitants had a very beautiful wife; a neighbor of his fell in love with her and carried her off; there was a great conflict in consequence, and, after many insults and blows, it was agreed to leave the decision of the matter to a Troglodyte who had been somewhat respected during the republic. They went before him and attempted to plead their antagonistic claims. "What does it matter to me," said this man, "whether the woman belongs to you or to him? I have my land to plough; I have not the slightest intention of wasting my time in settling your differences and regulating your affairs while my own are neglected. Be so good as to let me alone, and do not disturb me with your quarrels." Thereupon, he left them and went to work on

his farm. The ravisher, who was the stronger of the two, swore that only death should force him to give up the woman ; and the other, who was keenly affected by the injustice of his neighbor and the judge's harshness, was returning home in despair, when he came across a beautiful young woman coming back from the fountain. As he had no longer a wife, he felt drawn towards her, the more so when he learned she was the wife of the man whom he had wished to act as judge in his case, and who had been so little moved by his misfortune ; he seized her and carried her to his house.

Another man possessed a rather fertile field, which he cultivated with great care. Two of his neighbors entered into a plot to chase him from his house and take possession of his property. They made a solemn agreement to hold it against all who should attempt to eject them ; and, in fact, they were successful in doing so for several months ; but one of the two, tired of sharing with the other that which might belong to himself exclusively, killed his companion and became sole owner of the land. His ownership was not of long duration. Two or three Troglodytes attacked him ; he was too weak to resist, and he was massacred.

A Troglodyte, who was almost naked, saw some wool for sale ; he asked its price. The seller said to himself : " The real price of my wool would be as much money as would purchase two measures of wheat ; but I shall ask four times its value, and so be able to buy eight measures." The buyer had to submit and pay the price demanded. " I am very well pleased," said the seller ; " I can purchase some wheat now."—"What is that you are saying ?" rejoined the stranger ; " you want wheat ? I have some for sale. The price, though, will perhaps surprise you. You know that wheat is now extremely dear, — in fact, there is a famine almost everywhere ; but give me back my money, and I will give you one measure of wheat. I would not abate a jot in the price, even if you were dying of hunger."

In the mean time, a dreadful disease was ravaging the country. A skilful physician came from one of the neighboring states, and his prescriptions were so successful that all who entrusted themselves to his care were cured. When the epidemic had ceased, he went to those whom he had treated and demanded his fees. He was met with refusals on every side. He returned to his native country, exhausted by the fatigues of his long journey ; but he soon learned that the same malady had broken out anew, scourging that ungrateful land with more severity than ever. This time they came in search of him, instead of waiting for him to visit them. "Begone," he said, "ye iniquitous men ; your souls contain a poison more deadly than that of which you would be cured. You deserve not to occupy a place upon the earth, for you are destitute of humanity, and the laws of justice are unknown to you. I would offend the gods who punish you, were I to oppose their righteous anger."

ERZEROUH, the 3d of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XII.

USBK TO THE SAME

AT ISPAHAN.

You have seen, my dear Mirza, how the very wickedness of the Troglodytes was the occasion of their ruin, and how they became the victims of their own unrighteousness. Only two families out of the whole race survived its misfortune. There were two extraordinary men in that country : they were humane ; they cherished righteousness and loved virtue. They were united by the integrity of their hearts as much as by the corruption they had seen around them. They beheld the general desolation, and it moved them only to pity ; it created new ties between them. They labored with mutual

solicitude for the common interest ; no differences divided them, except those that occasionally spring from the tenderest friendship ; and in the most remote part of the country, far from those who were unworthy of sharing their society, they led a calm and happy life ; the earth, cultivated by these virtuous hands, seemed to yield its fruits spontaneously.

They loved their wives, and were in turn tenderly beloved by them. Their whole ambition was to rear their children virtuously. They constantly placed before their eyes the misfortunes of their fellow-countrymen, and proved to them by this thrilling example that the interest of the individual is one with the interest of the community ; that to attempt to separate them is to court ruin ; that virtue is a thing the practice of which ought to be found easy ; that we should never regard its cultivation as a painful exercise, and that justice to others is a blessing to ourselves. They had soon the consolation of virtuous fathers, which is to see their children grow up in their likeness. The young people, reared under their eyes, made happy marriages, and the community increased in number ; but, though it grew larger, the bond of union remained as strong as ever ; and virtue, far from becoming enfeebled amidst a multitude, was strengthened, on the contrary, by the multiplication of the examples of its power.

Who could depict the felicity of these Troglodytes now ? A people so righteous would surely become the special object of divine predilection. They were taught to know the gods from their earliest years, and having known them, they learned to fear them ; and thus whatever lack of refinement nature had left in their manners was supplied by religion.

They instituted festivals in honor of the gods. Maidens, adorned with flowers, and young men celebrated them with dancing and rustic minstrelsy ; then followed banquets in which gayety and frugality were equally important elements. It was at these gatherings that artless nature spoke ; it was

there that the young people learned to exchange their hearts ; it was there the blushing virgin was surprised into a confession soon to be sanctioned by the consent of parents ; it was there that tender mothers delighted to foresee the certainty of a sweet and loyal union.

When they entered the temples to entreat the favor of the gods, it was not affluence and an abundance of superfluities that they asked for,—such prayers would be unworthy of the happy Troglodytes ; they desired them only for their fellow-citizens. They approached the foot of the altar to offer their petitions for the health of their parents, the union of their brethren, the love of their wives, the affection and obedience of their children. Maidens brought thither the tender sacrifice of their hearts, and sought no other boon than that of being able to make a Troglodyte happy.

In the evening, when the flocks had left the meadows and the weary oxen returned with the ploughs, they gathered together. During a frugal repast, they sang of the wickedness of the early Troglodytes and of their misfortunes, of the revival of virtue among a new people and of that people's felicity ; they next sang of the greatness of the gods, the bounteous favors they bestow on those who seek their aid, and the inexorable vengeance they inflict on those who do not fear them ; they then described the delights of a country life, and the happiness of a condition which innocence adorns. Soon afterwards, they enjoyed a blissful repose, which no sorrow or anxiety ever interrupted for a moment.

Nature was not less generous to their pleasures than to their wants. In that happy land, cupidity was a stranger : they made presents to one another, but he who gave always believed that he had the advantage over him who received. The Troglodytes regarded themselves as one single family ; their herds were almost always intermingled, and the only trouble they ever avoided was that of separating them.

ERZEROUH, the 6th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XIII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

I COULD never give an adequate description of the virtue of the Troglodytes. On a certain day one of them said: "My father is to work to-morrow in his field. I shall rise two hours before him, and when he enters the field he will find all the work done."

Another said to himself: "If I am not mistaken, my sister has a fancy for a young Troglodyte who is one of our relations; I must speak to my father on the subject, and prevail on him to consent to their marriage."

Another was told that robbers had carried off his herd. "I am very sorry," he said; "for there was a white heifer belonging to it which I intended offering to the gods."

A Troglodyte was heard saying to a companion: "I must go to the temple and return thanks to the gods; my brother, whom my father and I love so dearly, has recovered his health."

And another one said: "There is a field which borders on my father's, and those who work in it are every day exposed to the heat of the sun. I must plant a couple of trees in it, so that these poor men may sometimes rest in their shade."

One day when several Troglodytes were assembled, an old man spoke of a young one, whom he suspected of having committed a bad action, and reproached him for having done so. "We do not believe him guilty of this crime," said the young Troglodytes; "but if he is, may he be the last of his family to die!"

A Troglodyte was informed that strangers had pillaged his house and carried away everything. "If they had not been wicked men," he replied, "I would pray that the gods might

give them a longer enjoyment of my possessions than I have had myself."

Such prosperity was not regarded without envy. The nations on their borders assembled, and decided on some wretched pretext or other to carry off their flocks and herds. As soon as this became known, the Troglodytes sent ambassadors who spoke to these people as follows:

"What have the Troglodytes done to you? Have they carried off your wives, stolen your cattle, or ravaged your lands? No, we are just men, and we fear the gods. What do you want from us? Do you need wool to make clothes? Do you need the milk of our herds or the products of our fields? Lay down your arms; come amongst us, and all you desire you shall have. But we swear by all we hold most sacred that, if you enter our country as enemies, we will regard you as an unrighteous people, and treat you as wild beasts."

These words were dismissed with scorn; the savages who heard them invaded the country of the Troglodytes in arms, believing that innocence was the sole defence of the latter.

But the Troglodytes were quite capable of defending themselves. They had placed their wives and children in their midst. They were appalled by the injustice of their enemies, not by their numbers. An ardor to which they had hitherto been strangers burned in their hearts; one wished to die for his father, another for his wife and children, this one for his brothers, that one for his friends, and all for the Troglodyte race. The place of him who fell was at once taken by his neighbor, who had the death of a friend as well as the common cause to avenge.

Such was the conflict between injustice and righteousness. The cowardly invaders, whose sole aim was plunder, were not ashamed to fly; and they succumbed to that virtuous daring of the Troglodytes by which their hearts could never be touched.

ERZEROUH, the 9th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XIV.

USBEEK TO THE SAME.

As the race was becoming every day more numerous the Troglodytes thought they ought to choose a king: they agreed that the crown should be offered to the most righteous man amongst them, and their eyes were directed to an aged individual whose long and virtuous career had excited their veneration. He had not cared to be present at their assembly, but had withdrawn to his home, a prey to sadness of heart.

When deputies were sent to inform him that he was the people's choice, he said: "God forbid that I should do the Troglodytes such a wrong as to lead them to believe that there is no man amongst them more just than I! You offer me the crown, and, if you insist, I must accept your offer. But rest assured that I shall die of shame on the day I behold the Troglodytes, who have been free ever since I saw the light of day, willing to submit to a master." Having spoken thus, he shed a torrent of tears. "O miserable day!" he exclaimed, "why have I lived, so long?" Then he cried out in a severe tone: "I see how the matter stands, O Troglodytes! your very virtue is becoming a burden to you. In your present condition, as you have no ruler, you are forced to be virtuous in spite of yourselves. Unless you were so, you could not exist, and would fall again into the despicable state of your forefathers. But the yoke of virtue galls you: you prefer to obey a prince, and be subject to his laws, — laws that might be less rigid than your own customs. You know that then you would be able to gratify your ambitious instincts, acquire wealth, and pass your days pleasantly in voluptuous indolence, and that, provided you avoided the greater crimes, you would have no need of virtue." He paused a moment, and the tears

coursed down his cheeks more rapidly than ever. "And what would you have me do? What commands could I give a Troglodyte? Would you have him do a virtuous act because I commanded it, an act he would do of himself from natural inclination? O Troglodytes! my life is near its close, my blood is frozen in my veins, soon shall I join the company of your sacred sires: why do you wish that I should cause them sorrow; why do you wish that I should have to tell them I left you under other yoke than that of virtue?"

ERZEROUN, the 10th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XV.

THE FIRST EUNUCH TO GARON, THE BLACK EUNUCH

AT ERZEROUN.

I PRAY to heaven for your return; may it guard you from every danger.

Although I have never known the tie which men call friendship, and although I be entirely wrapped up in myself, you have made me feel that I have still a heart, and while I was a man of bronze to the other slaves subject to my authority, I took a pleasure in watching your childhood and growth.

The time came when my master cast his eyes upon you. Long before nature had told you her mysteries, the knife separated you from nature. I will not say whether I pitied you, or whether I felt a certain satisfaction in seeing you brought to a level with myself. I dried your tears and stopped your cries. It seemed to me as if you had been born again, and were about to issue from a servitude in which you were compelled to obey and enter on a servitude in which it would be your right to command. I attended

to your education. The severity which is inseparable from the task of instruction left you long in ignorance of the fact that you were dear to me. Yet dear to me you were, and I will now tell you that I loved you as a father loves his son, if the name of father and son be compatible with our destiny.

You are about to wander through lands inhabited by Christians, men without faith in the prophet. It will be impossible for you to entirely avoid pollution. How could he regard you with favor amid so many millions of his enemies? I hope my master will, on his return, perform the pilgrimage to Mecca: you would both be purified in that angelic spot.

The Seraglio in Ispahan, the 10th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XVI. ✓

USBK TO THE MOLLAH MEHEMET ALI,

GUARDIAN OF THE THREE TOMBS AT KOUM.

Why, O divine mollah, do you live in tombs? You are far better qualified to dwell among the stars. Doubtless, fear that your brightness might obscure that of the sun, is the motive of your concealment: there are no spots on you, as there are on that luminary; but, like him, you enwrap yourself in clouds.

Your knowledge is an abyss deeper than the ocean; your mind is more piercing than Zufagar, the double-pointed sword of Ali; you are familiar with all that passes in the nine heavenly choirs; you read the Koran on the breast of our divine prophet, and when you encounter an obscure passage, an angel, by his order, unfolds his rapid wings and descends from the throne to reveal to you its secret.

I might, if aided by you, enter on a familiar correspondence with the seraphim; for, in fine, O thirteenth Imam,

are you not the centre where earth and heaven meet, and the point of communication between the abyss and the empyrean?

~~I am now dwelling amongst a heathen people; con-~~
 descend to bestow on me the means of being purified through your agency; suffer me to turn my eyes towards the sacred spot in which you abide; distinguish between me and the wicked, just as, at the dawning of the day, the observer distinguishes the white thread from the black; help me with your counsels; take care of my soul; animate it with the spirit of the prophets; foster it with the science of paradise, and permit me to lay its wounds bare before you. Address your sanctified letters to Erzeroum, where I intend stopping a few months.

ERZEROUM, the 11th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XVII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

I AM unable, divine mollah, to calm my impatience; I cannot wait with composure for your sublime answer - I have doubts, and they must be removed. I feel as if my reason were wandering: help it back to the right path. Shed your beams upon me, O source of all light! destroy with the thunderbolts of your heavenly pen all the difficulties I am about to place before you; make me blush with shame for the questions I am about to propound.

Why does our lawgiver deprive us of the flesh of swine and of the other meats he deems unclean? Why does he forbid us to touch a dead body; and why has he decreed that, in order to purify our souls, we must wash ourselves so frequently? It seems to me that things in themselves are neither pure nor impure: I cannot conceive of any

~~inherent quality that should render them either the one or the other. Mud appears to us to be dirty only because it offends our sight or some other of the senses, but in itself is no more so than gold or diamonds. The idea of the pollution we contract by touching a corpse arises from the natural repugnance we feel to do so. If the bodies of those who do not wash were not repulsive to our sight or smell, how could we discover that they were impure?~~

Must the senses then, divine mollah, be the sole judges of the purity or impurity of things? But, inasmuch as objects do not affect all men in the same manner,—for what produces an agreeable sensation in some excites disgust in others,—it follows that the testimony of the senses cannot serve as a guide, unless it be asserted that each individual can decide for himself according to his fancy, and discriminate between the clean and unclean, just as his own prepossessions dictate.

But would not this, O holy mollah, annihilate the distinctions established by our divine prophet, as well as the fundamental points of that law which was written by angelic hands?

ERZEROUN, the 20th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1711.

LETTER XVIII.

MEHEMET ALI, SERVANT OF THE PROPHETS TO
USBK

AT ERZEROUN.

You are ever asking questions that have been laid before our holy prophet a thousand times. Why do you not read the traditions of the doctors? Why do you not go to that pure source of all intelligence? If you did so, you would find all your doubts resolved.

Unhappy man! Always embarrassed by the things of earth, you have never riveted your eyes firmly on those of heaven; you reverence the life of the mollahs, but do not dare to embrace or follow it!

O profane beings who never enter into the secrets of the Eternal, your light resembles the darkness of the abyss, and the reasonings of your mind are like unto the dust which your feet set in motion when the sun is at its noon in the burning month of Chahban!

And so the zenith of your intellect does not rise as high as that of the lowest of the Imans. Your vain philosophy is like the lightning flash, foreboding storm and darkness: tempest-driven, you wander where the wind listeth.

Your difficulties are easily answered: to solve them, all that is necessary is to relate what happened to our holy prophet on a certain day, when, tempted by the Christians and harassed by the Jews, he confounded with equal skill the arguments of both.

The Jew Abdias Ibesalon¹ asked him why God had forbidden the use of swine's flesh. "He did not do so without good reason," returned the prophet; "the animal is unclean, and I am about to convince you of the fact." Thereupon he formed the image of a man out of mud, laid it upon the ground, and cried: "Arise!" The man at once arose and said: "I am Japhet, the son of Noah." — "Was your hair as white when you died as it is now?" inquired the holy prophet. "No," was the answer; "but when you awoke me I thought the day of judgment was at hand, and I was so terribly frightened that my hair suddenly turned white."

"Now relate to me," said the ambassador of God, "the whole history of Noah's ark." Japhet obeyed, and gave a correct and detailed account of all that had happened during the first months; after doing so, he continued: —

¹ A Mahometan tradition.

"We placed the excrements of all the animals on one side of the ark, and this made it lean so much that we were all in deadly fear, especially our wives, who howled as if their last end had come. Our father Noah consulted God about the trouble, and was by him commanded to take the elephant and turn its head towards the side that pitched forward. This big animal made so much excrement that a pig came forth from it." Now do you not see, Usbek, why we have ever since abstained from swine's flesh, and why we regard the pig as unclean?

"But, as the pig wallowed every day in this excrement, there arose such a stench in the ark that the animal itself could not avoid sneezing, and from its nose sprang a rat, which began gnawing everything it met. This conduct of the rat became so painful to the feelings of Noah that he saw it was time to have another consultation with God. He was ordered to hit the lion smartly on the forehead; the beast thereupon sneezed also; and from its nose a cat leaped."

Do you believe now that these animals are unclean? Do you require any further answer?

The cause of your failure to perceive the reason for the uncleanness of certain things is your ignorance of many other things besides; you have no knowledge of what has passed between God and angels and men. You are not acquainted with the history of eternity; you have not read the books that were written in heaven; what has been revealed to you is but a small part of the divine library; and even those who, like us, are nearer heaven, though living on earth, than others, are still in obscurity and darkness. Adieu. May Mahomet dwell in your heart.

KOURM, the last day of the moon of Chahban, 1711.

LETTER XIX.

USBK TO HIS FRIEND RUSTAN

AT ISPAHAN.

WE stayed only eight days at Tocat, and after a journey of thirty-five days are now in Smyrna.

Between Tocat and Smyrna there is not a single city worthy of the name.

I have seen with astonishment the weakness of the Osmanli empire. This diseased body is not supported by a mild and temperate regimen, but by violent remedies that exhaust and undermine it continually.

The pachas, who buy their offices, are without money when they enter their provinces, and ravage them as if they were conquered countries. An insolent rabble of soldiers obey only their own caprices. Fortresses are dismantled, towns deserted, country districts left desolate, and commerce and agriculture entirely abandoned.

Impunity reigns supreme in this rigorous government, and the Christians who till the soil and the Jews who collect the taxes are exposed to every kind of violence.

Property in land is uncertain, and, as a necessary consequence, the desire to improve it has been weakened. Neither title nor possession can withstand the caprices of those who govern.

To such a degree have the arts been disregarded by those barbarians that they have neglected even that of war. While the other nations of Europe are advancing further in civilization every day, they continue in their original ignorance, and never think of adopting new inventions until they have been a thousand times used against them.

They have no experience on sea and no skill in manoeuvring. It is said that a handful of Christians, issuing from a

rock, frighten these Ottomans into a cold perspiration, and shake the very foundations of their empire.¹

Unfit for commerce themselves, they look with an evil eye on those industrious and enterprising Europeans who come amongst them to manage their trade ; they think they are doing a favor to those foreigners in permitting them to add to the wealth of the country.

Notwithstanding the large extent of land I have travelled over, Smyrna is the only city which I can consider rich and powerful. It is indebted to the Europeans for its prosperity ; if it had to rely on the Turks it would resemble all the others.

And now, my dear Rustan, you have, I trust, a correct idea of this empire, which, before two centuries, is sure to be the scene of some conqueror's triumphs.

SMYRNA, the 2d of the moon of Rhamazan, 1711.

LETTER XX.

USBK TO HIS WIFE ZACHI

AT THE ISPAHAN SERAGLIO.

You have offended me, Zachi, and I feel the presence of emotions in my heart which should assuredly terrify you, did not my long absence leave you time to change your conduct, and thus appease the violent jealousy by which I am tormented.

I learn that you were found alone with Nadir, the white eunuch, whose death shall atone for his infidelity and perfidy. How could you forget yourself so far as not to feel that you are not allowed to admit a white eunuch into your chamber, as long as you have black ones at your service ? It is in vain for you to tell me that eunuchs are not men, and that

¹ The Knights of Malta, apparently.

your virtue renders you superior to such thoughts as these counterfeits of men might excite. Such an answer is not sufficient for you nor for me : not sufficient for you, because you have done a thing forbidden by the laws of the seraglio ; not sufficient for me, because you dishonor me by exposing yourself to the gaze — what do I say? — perhaps to the adventurous efforts of a traitor who may have polluted you by his crimes, and still more by his regrets and the despair engendered by his impotence.

You will tell me, perhaps, that you have always been faithful. Pray, how could you be otherwise? How could you ever have succeeded in deceiving the vigilance of the black eunuchs, who are so amazed at the life you lead? How could you have broken through those bars and doors behind which you are confined? You boast of a virtue which is not free, and, for all I know, your impure desires may have repeatedly despoiled you of the merit and value of that fidelity you vaunt so loudly.

I do not wish to think that you have done all that I had good grounds for suspecting ; I do not wish to think that the traitor has laid his sacrilegious hands upon you, that you were so prodigal as to let his eyes look on the delight of his master ; I will believe that, covered with your garments, you have placed that weak barrier between him and you ; that, stricken with a holy dread, he has lowered his eyes, and that, abandoned by his audacity, he trembled at the anticipation of the punishment to which he had rendered himself liable — though all this were true, it is not the less certain that you have violated your duty. And if you have done so gratuitously, without satisfying your irregular inclinations, what would you not have done if such gratification were possible? Again, what would you do if you were at liberty to leave the sacred spot which you regard as a hard prison, but which your companions look upon as a pleasant asylum sheltering them from the assaults of vice, — a sacred temple, in which your sex loses

its weakness and becomes invincible, in spite of all the disadvantages of nature? What would you do if, abandoned to your own instincts, you had nothing to protect you but your love for me, which has been so grievously disturbed, and your duty, which has been so shamefully betrayed? Holy are the customs of the country in which you dwell! They rescue you from the attempts of the vilest slaves! You ought to thank me for the compulsory retirement in which I force you to live, since it is only thereby that you deserve to live at all.

You cannot endure the chief of the eunuchs, because he is ever watchful of your demeanor, and ever ready to give you the sagest advice. "His ugliness is so great," say you, "that it pains you to look at him;" as if persons were selected for these sorts of positions on account of their beauty! Your real grief is that you cannot have in his place the white eunuch who dishonors you.

But what has your chief slave done to you? She has told you that the familiarities between you and Zelida were of an improper character; that is the motive of your hatred.

It is my duty, Zachy, to be a rigorous judge; and yet I am simply a husband who wishes to discover that you are innocent. The affection I feel for Roxana, my new wife, does not impair the love I am bound to cherish for you, who are quite as beautiful as she. Both of you are equally the objects of my tenderness, and Roxana has no advantage over you, except that which virtue adds to beauty.

SMYRNA, the 12th of the moon of Zilcade, 1711.

LETTER XXI.

USBEK TO THE FIRST WHITE EUNUCH.

You ought to tremble when you open this letter, or rather, you ought to have done so when you permitted the treachery of Nadir. You who, although you are enfeebled by years, cannot without crime lift your eyes to the dread objects of my love; you who are forbidden to set a sacrilegious foot across the threshold of the awful place which hides them from every eye, you allow those for whose conduct you are responsible to do what you yourself would never have the temerity to do! — and does not the thought of the thunderbolt ready to fall upon their heads and yours strike you with dismay?

And what are you but vile instruments that I may break at my pleasure? — creatures who exist only as long as you know how to obey; who have been sent into the world to live under my laws and to die when I order it; who breathe the breath of life just as long as my happiness, my love, or even my jealousy, has need of your vile service, and no longer; who, in fine, have no privilege but that of submission, no soul but my will, and no hope except that which springs from contributing to my felicity.

I know that some of my wives are impatient under the austere laws of duty; that the constant presence of a black eunuch vexes them; that they are weary of the frightful objects entrusted with the task of keeping them faithful to their husband; I know all this; but as for you who have encouraged this disorder, you shall be punished in a manner that will make all who abuse my confidence tremble.

I swear by all the heavenly prophets and by Ali, the greatest of them all, that if you falter in your duty, I shall feel as little compunction in crushing you as I do in crushing the insects I tread under my feet.

SMYRNA, the 12th of the moon of Zilcade, 1711.

LETTER XXII.

GARON TO THE FIRST EUNUCH.

THE farther Usbek travels from the seraglio, the more eagerly does he turn his thoughts to his sacred wives ; he sighs and weeps, his regrets grow keener, and his jealousy becomes stronger. He wishes to increase the number of their guardians. He is about to send me back with all the blacks who accompany him. He has no longer any fear on his own account, — his fear is for that which is a thousand times dearer to him than himself.

I am about, then, to live under your laws and to participate in your cares. Great heavens ! how many things are needed to render one single man happy !

Nature would seem to have at ~~one~~ time placed woman in a condition of dependence, and then to have freed her from her subjection. Immediately, disagreements sprang up between the two sexes because their rights were reciprocal. But a new species of harmony unites men and women at present : hatred is the tie that binds women and us, love is the tie that binds women and men.

Well, I must try to assume the demeanor befitting my future office : severity shall dwell on my brow, and sombre glances dart from my eyes. No smile shall flicker on my lips. My outward expression shall be calm, though the mind within be troubled. I will exhibit the wrinkles of old age long before its vexatious disabilities appear.

I should have liked to follow my master on his western journey, but my will is his property. It is his will that I watch over his wives ; I shall do so with fidelity. I know how to conduct myself towards a sex which, if allowed to be vain, becomes arrogant, and which it is less easy to humble than to destroy. I fall prostrate at your feet.

SMYRNA, the 12th of the moon of Zilcade, 1711.

LETTER XXIII.

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND IBSEN

AT SMYRNA.

We arrived at Leghorn after a voyage of forty days. It is a new city, and is a remarkable evidence of the genius of the dukes of Tuscany, who have changed a swampy village into the most flourishing town in Italy.

The women here enjoy great freedom: they can look at men through a sort of window called a *jalousie*; they may walk abroad every day accompanied by some old women; they wear only a single veil.¹ ~~Their brothers-in-law, uncles, and nephews can visit them without the slightest objection on the part of their husbands.~~

A Christian city affords a spectacle of great interest to a Mahometan, when seen for the first time. I do not speak of the objects which at once strike the eye, such as the difference between their edifices, dress, principal customs, and ours. ~~There is, even in the slightest trifles, a certain singularity which I feel but cannot express.~~

We start for Marseilles to-morrow; our stay there will not be long. It is the intention of Rica and myself to go immediately to Paris, the capital of the European empire. Travellers always make for the great cities, because they are a sort of common country where all strangers can meet. Adieu. Rest assured I shall always love you.

LEGHORN, the 12th of the moon of Saphar, 1712.

¹ The Persian women wear four.

① LETTER XXIV. (59)

RICA TO IBSEN

AT SMYRNA.

WE have been a month in Paris, and have never had a moment's rest. It takes a good deal of time and trouble to get lodgings, to find out the persons you are recommended to call upon, and to procure the necessary objects which are at once indispensable.

Paris is as large as Ispahan. The houses are so high that you would swear only astrologers would care to live in them. You will have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that a city built in the air, with five or six houses on top of one another, is extremely populous, and that, when everybody is in the streets, there is a good deal of confusion.

You would hardly believe that I have not seen a single person walking, during the month I have been here. No people in the world make a more constant use of carriages than the French. They run, they fly; the slow vehicles of Asia, the measured pace of our camels, would throw them into a lethargy. As for myself, such rushing and hurrying are by no means to my taste; and, as I often go afoot without changing my gait, I get sometimes as mad as a Christian, for even if I did not object to be splashed with mud all over, I could certainly never forgive the way in which I am jostled and elbowed regularly and periodically. One man just behind me gives me a shove as he passes that turns me half round, and another, coming from an opposite direction, sets me spinning until I am back in my original position; the result is, I am more exhausted after a hundred steps than I ought to be after walking ten leagues.

Do not imagine for a moment that I am in a position at present to describe fully the manners and customs of Eu-

rope, I have but a slight idea of them myself, and have had scarcely time to do anything but wonder.

The King of France is the most powerful prince in Europe. He has no gold mines, like his neighbor the King of Spain; but he is far richer than he, because he can draw his wealth from the vanity of his subjects, and that is more inexhaustible than all the mines in the world. He has undertaken or sustained great wars without other resources than the titles of honor he had for sale, and this marvellous example of human pride has enabled him to pay his troops, fortify his cities, and equip his fleets.

Moreover, this king is a great magician; even the minds of his subjects are subject to his dominion; he makes them think what he wishes. If he has only a million crowns in his treasury, he has but to persuade them that one crown is worth two, and they believe him. If he has to carry on a costly war, and is without money for the purpose, all he need do is to insinuate that a bit of paper is money, and they are all convinced that such is the case on the spot. He has even succeeded in making them believe that his mere touch cures all manner of diseases, so great is the strength and power he exercises over their minds.

Nor ought you to be astonished at the account I give of this prince; there is another magician whose control over the mind of this sovereign is as absolute as that of the latter is over his own subjects. This magician is called the Pope: at one time, he persuades the prince that three are really one; at another, that the bread he eats is not bread, or that the wine he drinks is not wine, and a thousand other such things.

And in order to keep him up to the mark, and not let him lose the habit of believing, he gives him, from time to time, certain articles of faith as an exercise. Two years ago, he sent him a huge document which he styled "Constitution," and insisted that king and people should believe all

therein contained under the heaviest penalties. He succeeded at once with the prince, who gave the example of submission to his subjects; but some of the latter revolted, and said they would not believe anything contained in that document. Women have been the prime movers in a rebellion which has divided the court, the kingdom and the family. The "Constitution" forbids the reading of a book which all Christians say was brought down from heaven; it is, in fact, their Koran. The women indignant at this outrage on their sex, are arousing the utmost hostility to this "Constitution;" they have won over the men, who are not particularly anxious about their privilege in the matter, to their side. It must be confessed that this Mufti does not reason badly; and, by the great Ali! it cannot be but that he has learned something of the principles of our holy law; for since women were created inferior to us, and since our prophets tell us they cannot enter paradise, why should it be necessary for them to read a book the sole purpose of which is to teach the way thither?

I have heard things about this king which seem incredible, and I have no doubt you will hesitate to believe them.

It is said that all the time he was making war on his neighbors, who had formed a league against him, he was surrounded by a legion of invisible enemies scattered over the whole realm; it is added that he has been searching for these same enemies during more than thirty years, and, despite the unwearied efforts of certain dervishes who have his confidence, has not been able to find a single one of them. They live with him, are in his court, his capital, among his soldiers and judges, and it is, however, stated that he will have the vexation of dying without discovering them. It looks as if these people existed in general, but not in particular; as if they formed a body which had no members. Doubtless, Heaven wished to punish this prince for his want of moderation towards his vanquished enemies,

Constitution
Pope not accepted
by women.

since with the
that women are
inferior to men.

and so has encompassed him with invisible foes, whose genius and destiny are superior to his own.

I will continue to write to you and keep you informed on subjects very remote from the Persian character and genius; but the men of the country in which you live and the men amongst whom I abide are very different sorts of men.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Rebiab, 1712.

LETTER XXV.

USBЕК TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

I HAVE received a letter from your nephew Rehdi: he tells me he is leaving Smyrna with the object of visiting Italy, and that the sole aim of his journey is to improve his mind, and so render himself more worthy of you. I congratulate you on having a nephew who will be some day the consolation of your old age.

Rica has written you a long letter; he informs me that he has given a very detailed account of this country in it. The liveliness of his intellect enables him to seize on points with great quickness; as I am a slower thinker, I regret to say that I am not as yet in a position to tell you anything.

You are often the subject of our affectionate conversation; we can never tire of referring to the generous reception you gave us at Smyrna, and the many evidences of friendship for which we are indebted to you. May you ever, noble-hearted Ibben, find friends as grateful and as faithful as we are!

What delight it would afford me to meet you soon once more, and spend with you one of those happy days that pass so pleasantly between two friends!

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Rebiab.

LETTER XXVI.

USBEK TO ROXANA

AT THE SERAGLIO IN ISPAHAN.

How happy you are, Roxana, to be living in the sweet land of Persia, and not in those corrupted countries where modesty and virtue are unknown! Happy Roxana! you dwell in my seraglio as in some abode of innocence impregnable to the assaults of mankind. It delights you to think that your fortunate disability insures you against the risk of falling. Never has a man sullied your innocence with a lascivious look; not even your father-in-law has seen your lovely mouth on those festal occasions when a certain amount of freedom is permitted, for you have never failed to cover it with a sacred veil. Happy Roxana! in the country, you have always had eunuchs to walk before you, ready to kill the audacious wretch who did not fly at your approach. What difficulty did not I myself, to whom Heaven sent you for my felicity, experience in mastering that treasure which you defended with such firmness! What an affliction it was for me not to see you during the first days of our marriage! And what impatience was mine when I did see you! You did not gratify it, however; you irritated it, on the contrary, by the stubborn refusals of an alarmed chastity; you confounded me with all those other men from whom you conceal yourself on every occasion. Do you remember the day when I lost you among your slaves, who betrayed me and frustrated my efforts to discover you? Do you remember that other day when, seeing that your tears were powerless, you appealed to the authority of your mother to check the fury of my love? Do you remember how, when all these resources failed you, you found others in your courageous soul? You seized a dagger and threatened to immolate the

husband that loved you, if he persisted in requiring from you that which you cherished even more than you did him. Two months passed in this combat between love and virtue. You pushed your chaste scruples too far ; you refused to surrender even after being vanquished, and defended to the last an expiring virginity ; you regarded me as an enemy who outraged you, not as a spouse who adored you ; for more than three months you never dared to lift your eyes to me without blushing ; your air of confusion seemed to reproach me for the advantage I had taken. I did not even enjoy a tranquil possession ; you robbed me of all the charms and graces you could, and I was intoxicated by the greatest favors though I could not obtain the least.

If you had been reared in this country, you would not have been thrown into such agitation ; the women here have lost all restraint ; they appear before men with their faces uncovered, as if they courted defeat ; they seek to attract their eyes ; they let their looks dwell upon them in the mosques, on the promenades, and even in their very homes ; the service of eunuchs is unknown. Instead of the noble simplicity and charming bashfulness which reign amongst you, a brutal shamelessness prevails, to which it is impossible for me to grow accustomed.

Yes, Roxana, if you were here you would feel outraged at the ignominious condition into which your sex has sunk ; you would fly those abominable places, and would sigh for the sweet retreat wherein you find happiness, where you are safe from yourself, where no danger terrifies you, and, in fine, where you can love me without ever fearing to lose that love which it is your duty to feel for me.

When you heighten the brilliancy of your complexion with the most beautiful colors ; when you perfume your body with the most precious essences ; when you appear in your loveliest garments ; when you try to distinguish yourself from your companions by the grace with which you dance and

the sweetness with which you sing ; in a word, when you attempt to rival them in charms, amiability, and sprightliness, I cannot imagine that in all this you have any other aim than the desire of pleasing me ; and when I see your modest blush, when your eyes meet mine, when you steal gently into my heart with soft and flattering words, I cannot, Roxana, doubt of your love.

But what am I to think of the women of Europe ? The art with which they make up their complexions, the ornaments with which they bedeck themselves, the attention they pay to their person, the perpetual desire of pleasing which engrosses them, are so many stains on their virtue and outrages on their husbands.

It is not, Roxana, that I believe they push their contempt for propriety as far as such conduct would lead one to believe, and that their debauchery attains that horrible excess, at the mention of which I shudder, the absolute violation of the conjugal tie. There are few women so abandoned as to carry crime to that extent : they all bear in their souls a certain impress of virtue which has been engraved thereon at their birth, and which education weakens, but does not destroy. They may be lax enough as to the external duties which modesty exacts. When it comes to taking the final step, nature revolts ; so that, when we imprison you so strictly, when we have you guarded by so many slaves, when we curb your desires with such severity, if they happen to stray beyond bounds, it is not because we dread the final act of unfaithfulness, — it is because we know that purity cannot be too stainless, and that the slightest blemish may corrupt it.

I pity you, Roxana. Your long-tried chastity merited a husband who would have never left you, and who could himself have repressed those desires which only your own virtue can now restrain.

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1712.

LETTER XXVII.

USBEK TO NESSIR

AT ISPAHAN.

WE are now in Paris, that haughty rival of the city of the sun.¹

When I was leaving Smyrna, I requested my friend Ibben to forward you a box containing some presents; you will receive this letter by the same agency. Although he and I are separated by some five or six hundred leagues, we exchange news with as much facility as if he were at Ispahan and I at Koum. I send my letters to Marseilles, whence ships are constantly sailing for Smyrna; from that city he forwards those intended to reach Persia by the Armenian caravans which start every day for Ispahan.

Rica enjoys perfect health; his strong constitution, his youth, and natural gayety render him superior to all trials.

But I cannot say as much of myself: both mind and body are in a low condition; I give way to reflections that become every day gloomier; my health grows worse, and my thoughts naturally turn to my native land, and refuse to abide in a country in which everything seems stranger the longer I dwell in it.

But I conjure you, dear Nessir, let not my wives become acquainted with my situation. If they love me, I would spare their tears; and if they love me not, I would not add to their perversity.

If my eunuchs believed me in danger, if they could hope that a base connivance would be followed by impunity, they would soon cease to be deaf to the alluring voice of that sex which can move rocks and affect even inanimate things.

Farewell, Nessir; it is a pleasure for me to know that I can give you this mark of my confidence.

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Chahban, 1712.

¹ Ispahan.

LETTER XXVIII.

RICA TO —.

I saw a strange thing yesterday, although it is common enough at Paris.

All the people assemble in the evening after dinner, and play at a sort of performance which I have heard called comedy. The main action takes place on a platform styled a theatre. On both sides of it are seen little recesses named boxes, in which men and women play in dumb show scenes that are not unlike those to which we are accustomed in Persia.

In one place a languishing dame sighs forth her pangs ; in another, a lady, with sparkling eyes and impassioned air, regards her lover with an ardor which he returns with interest. Every passion is reflected on their features, and expressed with an eloquence that is not the less fiery for being mute. The actresses, as a rule, are but half-clad, though their modesty generally induces them to wear a muff, in order to hide their arms. A crowd of people stand in the lower part of the theatre, who laugh at those above them, and those above them laugh in turn at them.

But the persons who take the most trouble of all are certain young men, who are selected for the purpose because the vigor natural to their time of life enables them to bear fatigue. They are obliged to be everywhere ; they pass through ways known to them alone, mounting with astounding agility from story to story ; they are now upstairs, now downstairs, now in this box, now in that ; they dive, so to speak, are lost, reappear. Often they leave one theatre, and are seen immediately in another. There are old men even who engage in the same antics as the others, and, considering that most of them carry crutches, their miraculous activ-

ity is well calculated to excite surprise. At last, some of the parties retire to halls where private comedies are played: they begin with profound salutations, which are followed by embraces. I am told the slightest acquaintance gives a man the right to squeeze another man to death: it would seem the place inspires tenderness. Indeed it is said that the princesses who are also present are far from cruel; and, if we except two or three hours of the day when they are rather morose, it may be affirmed that the rest of the time they are tractable enough, and that their moroseness is a kind of intoxication that quits them easily.

All the incidents I have just written to you about are reproduced, in pretty much the same form, at another place called the Opera: the only difference is, that what is spoken at the one, is sung at the other. One of my friends, a few days ago, introduced me into the box where one of the principal actresses was disrobing. We became so well acquainted that on the next morning I received this letter from her.

MONSIEUR,—I am the most unhappy girl in the world; I have always been the most virtuous actress belonging to the Opera. But seven or eight months ago, when I was in the same room you saw me in yesterday, dressing for my part as a priestess of Diana, a young abbé came thither, and, without respect for my white robe, my veil, and fillet, robbed me of my virtue. In vain do I represent in the most glowing colors the importance of the sacrifice I have made for him; he laughs in my face, and maintains that he has found nothing sacred or sacrificial about me. However, I have now reached such a degree of pregnancy that I no longer dare to appear in the theatre; for my delicacy on the point of honor is something inconceivable, and I have always held that a girl of good birth can lose her virtue more easily than her modesty. As I am a person of such consummate delicacy, you will have no difficulty in imagining that this young abbé would never have succeeded, had he not promised to marry me. Owing to my very justifi-

able reliance on this promise, I neglected the ordinary little formalities, and began where I should have ended. But, since his infidelity has dishonored me, I no longer wish to live at the Opera, where, between you and me, they hardly give me enough to enable me to live; for now that I am growing older and gradually losing my charms, my salary, though it is always the same, seems to me to grow less and less every day. I have been informed by a member of your suite that, in your country, a good dancer is esteemed beyond measure, and that, were I at Ispahan, my fortune would be made at once. If you would be kind enough to grant me your protection, and take me with you to your country, you would have the credit of doing a favor to a woman whose virtue and conduct render her not unworthy of your benevolence.

I am —,

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

LETTER XXIX.

RICA TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

THE Pope is the head of the Christians. He is an old idol to which incense is offered from habit. At one time he was formidable even to princes, for he deposed them with as much ease as our magnificent sultans depose the kings of Irimetta and Georgia. But he is feared no longer. He proclaims himself to be the successor of one of the first Christians, called Saint Peter; and certainly his inheritance is a rich one, for he has immense treasures, and a large extent of territory is under his dominion.

The bishops are jurists of a certain character; they are subordinates of the Pope, and exercise two very different functions under his authority. When they are gathered together, they can, like him, decree articles of faith; while in their individual capacity, they have hardly any other function than

that of dispensing with the law. For you must understand that the Christian religion is burdened with an immense number of customs that are very hard to observe ; and, as it has been judged that it is less easy to observe these customs than to have bishops who can dispense from their observance, these functionaries have been appointed in the interests of the public. Thus, if a person is unwilling to keep the *rahmasan*, or desires to have the customary formalities in marriage omitted, or to break his vows, or to marry within the forbidden degrees of kindred, or, sometimes, to be released from his oath, application is made to the bishop or to the Pope, who gives a dispensation at once.

The bishops do not decree articles of faith of their own motion. There are numberless doctors, dervishes for the most part, who create new religious difficulties among themselves ; they are allowed to dispute for a considerable period, and the war lasts until it is terminated by a decision.

Consequently, I am able to assure you that there never has been a kingdom in which there have been so many civil wars as in that of Christ.

Those who startle the world with some new proposition are at first called heretics. Every heresy has its own particular name, which becomes the rallying-cry of its adherents. But no one need be a heretic unless he is perfectly willing to be so : all he has to do is to split a hair with his adversaries ; to propound some subtle distinction for the benefit of his accusers ; and whether his distinction be intelligible or not, it renders our logician as white as snow, and he may now insist on being called orthodox.

All I have mentioned holds good for France and Germany, for I have been told that in Spain and Italy there are certain dervishes who do not understand a joke, and who burn a man, just as if he were so much straw. Whoever falls into the hands of these people may account himself happy if he has always prayed to God with little wooden beads in his hand,

or has worn two pieces of cloth tied with two ribbons, or has gone to a place they call Galicia ! A poor devil who cannot advance any of these proofs of his innocence finds himself in terrible trouble indeed ! Though he swear like any pagan that he is orthodox, they will very likely refuse to be moved by his protestations, and will roast him as a heretic. His distinctions may be in the subtlest vein — they will have none of them ; he will be ashes before they have heard him to the end.

Other judges presume that the accused is innocent ; these always presume that he is guilty. In any doubt their rule is to lean to the side of severity, and this apparently because they believe men are naturally bad ; but, on the other hand, they have so high an opinion of men that they consider them incapable of lying ; for they receive the testimony of deadly enemies, of women of evil life, and of men who exercise an infamous trade. When they sentence their victims, they pay a neat little compliment to those unfortunates decked in brimstone-colored shirts, and tell them that they are much afflicted at seeing them so poorly clad, that they are merciful and abhor blood, and the necessity they have been under of condemning them fills them with despair. Then they assuage their distressful emotions by confiscating to their own profit the possessions of these unhappy wretches.

Happy the land which the children of the Prophet inhabit ! There such sad spectacles are unknown.¹ The Holy religion brought down to it by the angels appeals only to truth for its defence ; it can maintain itself without recourse to such violent means.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

¹ The Persians are the most tolerant of all the Mahometans.

LETTER XXX.

RICA TO THE SAME

AT SMYRNA.

THE curiosity of the natives of Paris reaches excessive proportions. When I arrived here, I was stared at as if I had dropped down from the sky ; old men, young men, women, children, all were wild to get a sight of me. If I went out for a walk, every one ran to the window ; if I entered the Tuileries, a circle immediately gathered around me ; even the women formed an arc in my neighborhood variegated like a rainbow of a thousand colors. Did I go to the theatre, every opera-glass was levelled at me ; in fine, never was human being the object of so much notice as I. I used to smile sometimes on hearing people who hardly ever left their chamber, say to each other : "How very Persian he does look !" To increase my surprise, I found my portraits everywhere ; in all the shops, on every mantelpiece, so much did they dread the idea of not having me always before their eyes.

So much honor at last became a burden ; I did not believe that I was such a rare and exceptional specimen of human kind ; and, although I have a sufficiently good opinion of myself, I could never have imagined that my presence should disturb the peace of a great city where I was unknown. After reflecting on the matter I decided to abandon my Persian garb and dress in the European style ; I should thus be able to discover whether there was anything still left in my physiognomy calculated to excite the admiration of the world. The experiment gave me some idea of my real value. Stripped of my foreign adornments, I saw that I was measured by another standard. I had good reason to complain of my tailor, who had thus deprived me of the attention and esteem of the public in a moment ; for my insignificance became apparent at once. I remained sometimes a whole hour

in a company, and no one ever thought of looking at me ; nor had I a single opportunity of opening my mouth. If some individual, however, chanced to remark : " He is a Persian," there was immediately a buzzing murmur around me : " Ah ! indeed ! Monsieur is a Persian ? How very extraordinary ! How in the world can he be a Persian ? "

PARIS, the 6th of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

LETTER XXXI.

RHEDI TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

I AM now in Venice, my dear Usbek. Though you saw every city in the world, Venice would still be a source of wonderment to you ; it will always create astonishment to see a city, with its towers and mosques, rising from the depths of the waters, and to find an innumerable crowd of people in a spot where you should expect only to find fish.

But this pagan city lacks the most precious treasure there is in the world, namely, fresh water ; it is impossible to perform a single lawful ablution. It is held in abomination by our holy prophet, and he never gazes down on it from heaven but with anger.

But for this circumstance, my dear Usbek, I should be delighted to live in a city where my mind acquires fresh vigor every day. I am gaining a knowledge of the secrets of commerce, the interests of princes, and the different forms of government in their states ; I do not disregard European superstitions even ; I am studying medicine, natural philosophy, and astronomy, and am also giving some attention to the arts. At length, I am succeeding in dispelling the clouds that obscured my eyesight in the land of my birth.

VENICE, the 16th of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

LETTER XXXII.

RICA TO —.

I VISITED an institution the other day where three hundred persons are lodged rather poorly. It did not take me long, for neither the church nor the buildings are worthy of much notice. Those I saw there appeared to be in high good-humor; many were playing at cards, or at other games with which I am not acquainted. As I was leaving, one of these left at the same time, and, having heard me ask the way to the Marais, which is the remotest quarter of Paris, he said: "I am going there; follow me, and I will show you the way." I could not have had a better guide; he extricated me from several embarrassing predicaments, and protected me adroitly from wagons and carriages. When we had almost reached our destination, my curiosity prompted me to say: "My good friend, may I take the liberty of inquiring who you are?" — "I am blind, monsieur," he answered. "What! you are blind!" I exclaimed. "Then, how is it you did not ask the worthy man who was playing cards with you to conduct us?" — "He is blind also," he replied. "There have been, for the last four hundred years, three hundred blind men in the house where you met me. But I have to leave you: there is your street; I will now lose myself in the crowd, and then enter your church, where, I assure you, I shall be more in the way of people than they will be in mine."

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of Chival, 1712.

LETTER XXXIIL

USBK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

WINE is so dear in Paris, on account of the heavy duties on it, that it would seem as if there was a desire to fulfil the precepts of the divine Koran, which interdicts its use.

When I think of the fatal effects of that beverage, I cannot avoid regarding it as the most fatal gift that nature has bestowed upon man. Nothing has blasted the reputation and lives of our monarchs to such a degree as intemperance: it has been the most noxious source of their cruelty and injustice.

To the shame of these men be it said that, although the law forbids our princes to drink wine, yet they drink it, and to an excess that degrades them below humanity even. Christian princes are, on the other hand, permitted to use it, and it has not been observed that any fault on their part can be traced to the custom. The human mind is in perpetual contradiction with itself: in a licentious debauch, men revolt furiously against all precepts, and the law made to render us more upright often serves only to render us the more guilty.

But when I disapprove the use of this liquor, which destroys reason, I do not, therefore, condemn those beverages that enliven the mind. To seek remedies against sadness with as much care as against the most dangerous maladies is one of the marks of Oriental wisdom. When a European meets with misfortune, his sole resource is the perusal of a work written by a philosopher named Seneca; but the Asiatics are more sagacious than they, and prove the better physicians, for they drink a beverage that contributes to the gayety of man and dulls the memory of his sorrows.

No consolations are more grievous than those drawn from the necessity of evil, the inutility of remedies, the fatality of destiny, the order established by Providence, and the essential misery of human life. To attempt to alleviate distress by affirming that man was born to be wretched is to make sport of affliction; much better is it to elevate the mind above such considerations, and treat him as a being who feels, instead of as a being who reasons.

The soul, as long as it is united with the body, is subject to that body's tyranny. If the blood moves slowly through our veins, if our spirits are not sufficiently relieved from their impurities, or are inadequate in their amount, we fall into dejection and melancholy; but if we imbibe those infusions which tend to change the disposition of the body, the soul becomes capable of receiving exhilarating impressions, and experiences a secret satisfaction at seeing its machine resume, so to speak, its life and motion.

· PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Zilcade, 1713.

LETTER XXXIV.

USBK TO IBEN

AT SMYRNA.

·
THE women of Persia are more beautiful than the women of France, but the latter are prettier. It is hard not to feel love in the presence of the former, and delight in that of the latter: the first are more tender and modest, the second more vivacious and spirited.

The regular life which the women of Persia lead is the potent cause of their beauty; they neither gamble nor sit up late; they drink no wine, and almost never expose themselves to the atmosphere. It must be acknowledged that life in the seraglio is more conducive to health than to pleasure;

it is a calm, untroubled life ; everything in it is connected with subordination and duty ; even its pleasures are serious and its joys austere, and are all in themselves significant of authority and dependence.

Even the men in Persia have not the same gayety as Frenchmen ; you never find amongst them that freedom of spirit and that air of contentment which is here the prerogative of all states and of all conditions.

It is still worse in Turkey ; there families may be discovered that, from father to son, have never laughed since the foundation of the monarchy.

The gravity of Asiatics springs from the absence of intercourse ; they never see one another except when forced by the exigencies of ceremony. Friendship, that sweet tie of the heart which sustains us in the trials of life, is to them almost unknown ; they stay within their houses, where the same companions always await them, so that each family is, as it were, isolated from all the others.

One day, when I was discussing the subject with a man of this country, he said to me : “ Nothing disgusts me more with your customs than the fact that you have to live with slaves whose hearts and minds are on a level with their ignoble condition. These base creatures weaken the virtuous sentiments you inherit from nature, and as they are around you from childhood, they must even destroy them.

“ For just try to look at the matter with unprejudiced eyes ; what sort of a training can be expected from a wretch who regards the guardianship of another man's wives as his sole title to honor, and for whom the vilest of employments is a source of pride ; whose very fidelity, his solitary virtue, is utterly degrading, because its motives are envy, jealousy, and despair ; who, spurned by either sex, burns to be avenged on both, and consents to be tyrannized over by the stronger, in order that he may afflict the weaker ; who derives, from his imperfection, ugliness, and deformity, all the authority of

his position, and is esteemed only because he is unworthy of being so ; who, in fine, riveted forever to the door behind which he stands, harsher than the bolts and bars that secure it, boasts of the fifty years he has spent in this infamous post, in which, as the tool of his master's jealousy, he has given free rein to all his baseness."

PARIS, the 14th of the moon of Zilhage, 1713.

LETTER XXXV.

USBK TO GEMSCHID, HIS COUSIN,

DERVISH OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS MONASTERY OF TAURIS.

WHAT is your opinion of the Christians, sublime dervish ? Do you believe that at the day of judgment they will, like the unbelieving Turks, serve as asses for the Jews, and be ridden by the latter at full speed down into hell ? I know well they cannot enter the abode of the prophets, and that the great Ali was not sent on a mission to them. But because they have been so unfortunate as never to find a mosque in their country, do you think they are, therefore, to be condemned to eternal tortures, and that God will punish them for not practising a religion of which they never heard ? Permit me to tell you that I have often questioned these Christians, and have asked them what idea they had formed of the illustrious Ali, the most perfect of all men ; I have discovered that they were unaware of the existence of any such person.

Consequently, they do not resemble those infidels whom our holy prophets put to the sword because they refused to believe in the miracles of heaven ; their position would rather appear to be that of the unfortunates who lived in the darkness of idolatry before the divine light illuminated the countenance of our great prophet.

Besides, if their religion be closely examined, it will be found to contain imperfectly developed germs of our dogmas. I have often admired the secret operations of Providence, which would seem to have adopted this plan of preparing them for a general conversion. A work by one of their doctors, entitled "Polygamy Triumphant," has been brought to my notice, wherein the writer proves that polygamy is appointed for all Christians. Their baptism bears a likeness to our legal ablutions ; and their error consists in the efficacy they attribute to the first ablution, for they believe that it renders subsequent ones unnecessary. Like us, their priests and monks pray seven times a day. They also look forward to a paradise, where, by means of the resurrection of the body, they will enjoy numberless delights. Like us, they observe regular fasts and mortifications, by which they expect to dispose the divine mercy in their favor. They worship the good angels, and fear the bad. They have a sacred confidence in the miracles wrought by God through the medium of his servants. Like us, they acknowledge the insufficiency of their merits and the need of an intercessor with God. I see Mahometanism everywhere, although I do not find Mahomet anywhere. In spite of all obstacles, truth will triumph, and always pierce the darkness that surrounds it. Time, which consumes all things, will annihilate even error. Men will be astonished to find themselves all marshalled under the same standard ; everything, even the law, will be fulfilled ; the divine copies thereof will be carried away from earth and borne to the heavenly archives.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Zilhage, 1713.

LETTER XXXVI.

USBЕК TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

COFFEE is very much in use in Paris ; there are a great many public resorts where it may be drunk. In some of these houses gossip is the order of the day, in others chess. There is one place where the coffee is prepared in such fashion that it renders those who imbibe it witty ; at least, every one who leaves believes that he is four times wittier than when he entered.

I confess, though, I am rather disgusted with those talented personages ; for instead of making themselves useful to their country, they waste their abilities on the most childish trifles. For example, when I arrived in Paris, I found them quite excited over the most trivial question imaginable : it was that of the reputation of a Greek poet, as to the place of whose birth and the time of whose death the world has remained in ignorance for two thousand years. Both parties acknowledge that he was an excellent poet ; the dispute turned solely on the degree of his excellence, and each had his own standard of measurement ; but some of these dispensers of fame had a higher one, some a lower ; and now you have the whole ground of the quarrel. It surely was spirited enough ; the most insulting remarks were interchanged with great cordiality ; some of the retorts were so acrimonious that the manner of the debate was to me as great a source of wonder as the matter. "If any one," said I to myself, "were harebrained enough to attack the reputation of some honest citizen in presence of the defenders of this Greek poet, he would meet with an unpleasant surprise ; for I have no doubt that a zeal so sensitive with regard to the fame of the dead would blaze up at once in

defence of the living! But however that may be," I added, "Heaven defend me from attracting in my direction the enmity of the censors of a poet who, though he has lain two thousand years in the tomb, is not safe from their implacable hatred! Their fury is now expended on the air; what would it be if animated by the presence of a living foe?"

The persons to whom I have referred dispute in the vulgar tongue, and must be distinguished from another kind of controversialists who use a barbarous language that of itself seems to increase the rage and obstinacy of the combatants. There are quarters where these people may be seen contending like a confused mass of soldiers in black regimentals engaged in some hand-to-hand encounter. Subtle distinctions are their food; obscure reasonings and false inferences their very life. Their trade, although, at first sight, one might imagine its followers would die of hunger, really brings them in some return. We have had the spectacle of an entire nation, expelled from their own country, crossing the seas in order to settle in France, and carrying with them no other means of providing for the necessities of existence except a formidable talent for disputation. Adieu.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Zilhage, 1713.

✓ LETTER XXXVII.

USBK TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

THE King of France is old. In our history we have no example of a monarch who has reigned so long. It is said he possesses in a very high degree the talent of compelling obedience; his ability is equally displayed in the government of his family, his court, and his state. He has evi-

dently a high opinion of Oriental policy, for he has been heard to say that of all the governments in the world that of the Turks and that of our august sultan pleased him the best.

I have studied his character, and have discovered contradictions in it which I find impossible to harmonize; for example, he has a minister who is only eighteen, and a mistress who is eighty; he loves his religion, but cannot endure those who tell him that its duties must be rigorously observed; although he flies from the uproar of cities and leads a most retired life, everything he does from morning to night is with the view of having the world speak of him; he loves trophies and victories, yet is as much alarmed at the appearance of a good general at the head of his armies as he might be expected to be if he saw him at the head of an army of his enemies.

He is, I imagine, the only example on record of a man who is at once burdened with more riches than a prince could ever hope for, and the victim of such poverty as would reduce a private individual to despair.

He loves to bestow favors on his subjects; but the obsequious diligence, or rather busy indolence, of his courtiers is rewarded with as much munificence as the laborious campaigns of his captains. He is often more inclined to advance the man who undresses him or who hands him his napkin at table, than he is to exalt the general who captures cities and wins battles. He does not believe that the greatness of a sovereign should be limited in the distribution of graces, and never considers whether the recipient of his bounty is a man of merit, because he thinks his selection of him is enough of itself to render him deserving; accordingly, he has been known to confer a small pension on an officer who has run two leagues from the enemy, and a lucrative government on one who had run four.

He is magnificent in all things, but particularly in his

buildings. There are more statues in the gardens of his palace than there are citizens in a great city. ~~His body-guard is as numerous as that of the sovereign before whom all other monarchs lie prostrate ; his armies are as large, his resources as great, and his finances as inexhaustible.~~

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of Maharram, 1713.

LETTER XXXVIII.

RICA TO IBSEN

AT SMYRNA.

It is a weighty subject of discussion among men whether to leave women their freedom or to deprive them of it is the more advantageous. It seems to me that much may be said on both sides. While Europeans affirm that to render those we love miserable is anything but the indication of a generous spirit, we Asiatics reply that to renounce the supremacy which nature has given us over women is a symptom of degradation in men. If they tell us that such a superfluity of wives shut up in one house is embarrassing, we retort that ten wives who obey are less embarrassing than one who does n't. If in turn we urge the objection that Europeans can only be happy with wives that are faithful to them, they answer that the vaunted fidelity of our wives cannot prevent the disgust ever on the watch for satiated passion ; that they are too absolutely ours ; that a possession so undisturbed, if it leaves nothing to be feared, leaves nothing to be desired ; and that a little coquetry, like salt, arouses desire and prevents corruption. It would take, perhaps, a wiser man than me to solve the difficulty ; for if the Asiatics adopt the proper means to quiet their jealousy, the Europeans may be equally judicious in not having any.

"After all," say they, "though we may be unfortunate as husbands, we can always find compensation as lovers. A man might justly complain of the infidelity of his wife, if there were only three persons in the world ; but, when a fourth can be found, the balance of the account is restored."

Another topic of discussion is whether the law of nature subjects women to men : "No," said a very gallant philosopher to me the other day, "Nature never dictated such a law ; the authority we exercise over them owes its existence to tyranny ; they allow us to use it, because their disposition is milder than ours, and they, consequently, have more humanity and reason. These advantages, which ought to have given them the superiority, if we had been reasonable, have deprived them of it, because we are not so."

"Now, if it is true that our power over women is purely tyrannical, it is not less true that theirs over us is natural, having its source in beauty, which nothing can resist. Our power is not the same in every country ; but that of beauty is universal. Why should we be specially privileged ? Because we are the stronger ? Such a reason would be absolutely unjust. We use every possible means to depress their courage ; if they were educated as we are, their intellectual capacity would be found fully equal to ours ; test them by the gifts they have been allowed to cultivate, and then tell me which sex is the stronger."

It must be confessed, although such a thing is abhorrent to our customs, that, among the most refined nations, women have always had authority over their husbands. Such authority was established by law among the Egyptians in honor of Isis, and among the Babylonians in honor of Semiramis. It was said of the Romans that they commanded all nations, but obeyed their wives. I speak not of the Sauromates, who were actually the slaves of their wives, because they were too barbarous to be quoted as an example.

You see, my dear Ibben, how I accommodate myself to the argumentative methods of this country, where the most extraordinary opinions are zealously supported, and everything reduced to a paradox. The prophet has settled the question, and regulated the prerogatives of both sexes. "Wives," says he, "should honor their husbands, husbands should honor their wives; but the former are a degree higher in the scale of creation."

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1713.

LETTER XXXIX.

HAGI¹ IBBI TO THE JEW BEN JOSHUA,

MAHOMETAN PROSELYTE, AT SMYRNA.

It seems to me, Ben Joshua, that the birth of extraordinary men is always preceded by wonderful prognostics, as if nature suffered a kind of convulsion, and even divine power could not bring forth without travail.

There is nothing so marvellous as the birth of Mahomet. God, who by the decrees of his providence, had determined from all eternity to send this great prophet to mankind, that Satan might by his agency be chained, created a light two thousand years before Adam: and this light, passing from elect to elect, from one ancestor of Mahomet to another, reached him at last, an authentic sign of his descent from the patriarchs.

It was also because of this very prophet that God decreed that no child should be conceived, that woman should cease to be unclean, and that the *membrum virile* should be subject to circumcision.

He came into the world circumcised, and joy shone on his features from his birth. The earth trembled three

¹ A man who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

times, as if she herself had been in labor; all idols fell prostrate; the thrones of kings were overturned; Lucifer was hurled down into the bottom of the sea, and was not able to emerge from its depths until he had been swimming forty days. Then he fled to Mount Cabes, whence he called to the angels with a terrible voice.

That night God placed a limit between man and woman which neither should ever pass. The arts of the magicians and necromancers lost their power. A voice was heard proclaiming these words from the heavens: "I have sent to the world my faithful friend."

According to the testimony of Isben Aben, an Arabian historian, all the generations of the birds, the clouds, and the winds, and all the squadrons of the angels, assembled for the purpose of bringing up this child, and disputed about the privilege. The birds said in their warblings that they should have the honor of rearing him, as they could so easily collect a variety of fruit from so many different places. "No," murmured the winds, "this is our prerogative, since we can waft to him the most agreeable odors from every direction."—"No, no," exclaimed the clouds; "it is for us to foster him, because we can at any moment refresh him with our waters." Thereupon, the angels cried out indignantly: "In that case, what is there left for us to do?" But a voice issued forth from heaven and terminated all dissension: "He will not be taken away from mortal hands, because blessed shall be the paps that suckle him, and the hands that touch him, and the house in which he shall rest, and the bed whereon he shall lie."

After so many conclusive testimonies, my dear Joshua, that heart must be of iron which refuses his holy law. What more could Heaven have done to authorize his divine mission, unless it overturned nature and destroyed the very men it aimed to convince?

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XL.

USBEK TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

As soon as a great man dies, people assemble in a mosque and listen to a funeral oration in his praise. It would be very difficult, however, to gather from the discourse pronounced on the occasion any correct idea as to the real character of the deceased. If I had my way, I would banish all funeral pomp: the birth of men should be a subject of lamentation, not their death. What avail all these ceremonious observances and lugubrious shows that are displayed before the eyes of a dying man at the moment of his departure? Do they not, like the tears of his family and the grief of his friends, serve but to exaggerate the loss he is about to suffer?

We are so blind that we do not know when we ought to mourn or when to rejoice; our mirth, like our sorrow, almost always bears the stamp of deception.

When I behold the Great Mogul place himself every year in the balance to be weighed like an ox, when I see his people rejoice at the increasing obesity of their prince, that is to say at the augmentation of a deformity that renders him less fit to govern them, I weep, Ibben, for the extravagance of mankind.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLI.

THE FIRST BLACK EUNUCH TO USBEK.

ISMAEL, one of your black eunuchs, magnificent lord, has just died, and it is absolutely necessary to replace him. As eunuchs are very hard to be got at present, it occurred to me that I might utilize for the purpose a black slave whom you have in the country; but, so far, I have been unable to persuade him to allow himself to be consecrated to this office. As I believe that ultimately the change would redound to his advantage, I tried, the other day, to employ a little gentle violence; and, in unison with the superintendent of your gardens, I ordered that, whether he wished or no, he should be placed in a situation which would enable him to render you those services that are most gratifying to your heart, and live, like me, in those dread places, to which he dare not now even raise his eyes. But he at once began to howl as if we were flaying him alive, and struggled so fiercely that he escaped from our hands, and so avoided the fatal knife. I have just learned that he intends writing to you to beg for mercy, and that he will declare I have been actuated in the matter by an insatiable desire of vengeance, because of certain stinging taunts he says he has uttered on my condition. But I swear by the hundred thousand prophets that in this I have only acted for the good of your service, the only thing dear to me, the object on which all my thoughts are concentrated. I prostrate myself at your feet.

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 7th of the moon of Maharram, 1713.

LETTER XLII.

PHARAN TO USBEK, HIS SOVEREIGN LORD.

If you were here, magnificent lord, I would appear before your eyes all covered with white paper, and yet there would not be enough on me for a description of all the insults your first black eunuch, the most malignant of human beings, has heaped upon me since your departure.

Making certain sarcasms, which he assumes that I made on his wretched condition the pretext, he is trying to wreak an ineffable vengeance upon my head. He has excited against me the cruel superintendent of your gardens, who, ever since you left, has overwhelmed me with impossible tasks, in which, though I have a thousand times been on the verge of losing my life, my zeal for your service has never for a moment slackened. How often have I said within myself: "I have the gentlest of masters, and yet I am the most unhappy slave in the whole world!"

I will confess, O magnificent lord, that I did not believe I was fated to endure still heavier calamities; but this virulent eunuch has wished to cap the climax of his malevolence. Some days ago, on his own private authority, he purposed appointing me to the guardianship of your sacred wives, a doom that would be for me a thousand times worse than death. Those who, at their birth, have had the misfortune to receive such treatment from their cruel parents, may perhaps console themselves with the thought that they have never known any other condition; but were I deprived of that which ranks me among men, I should die of grief, if I did not die of the barbarous cruelty of the ordeal.

I kiss your feet, sublime lord, with the deepest humility; let me, too, share in the efficiency of that virtue which the

world reveres ; let it not be said your commands have added another unfortunate to the number of the unhappy.

The Gardens of Fatme, the 7th of the moon of Maharram, 1713.

LETTER XLIII.

USBK TO PHARAN.

LET joy again abide in your heart ; such must be the case when you recognize these sacred characters ; bid the chief eunuch and the superintendent of my gardens kiss them. I forbid them to lay a hand on you before my return ; tell them to purchase the eunuch that is required. Perform your duty as if you had me always before your eyes ; for know that the punishment I inflict on those who abuse my bounty is in proportion to its greatness.

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLIV.

USBK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THERE are three privileged orders in France : the church, the sword, and the gown. Each has a sovereign contempt for the two others : a man who might deserve to be despised for happening to be a fool, is held in scorn for happening to be a lawyer.

Even the meanest artisans dispute over the superiority of their particular trade : a man's idea of his eminence above those of a different craft is in exact proportion to his conception of the exalted nature of his own.

All men more or less resemble that woman of the province of Erivan who, having received a favor from one of our monarchs, wished a thousand times in the benedictions she lavished on him that God would make him governor of Erivan.

I have read in some narrative or other that when a French vessel had anchored off the coast of Guinea, some of the crew went ashore to purchase sheep. They were brought before the king, who was administering justice to his subjects under a tree. The throne whereon he sat was a block of wood, but not the Great Mogul had a prouder demeanor: three or four guards, armed with wooden pikes, were around him; an umbrella served as a canopy to shelter him from the rays of the sun; all his ornaments, as well as those of his queen, consisted of their shining black skins and a few rings. This prince, whose self-conceit was greater than even his wretchedness, asked these strangers if he was much talked about in France. He believed that his fame must have spread from pole to pole; and, unlike that conqueror of whom it has been said that he reduced the whole earth to silence, he never doubted but that the entire universe was making him the subject of its conversation.

When the Khan of Tartary has dined, a herald proclaims that all the princes of the world may now go to dinner, if they choose; and this barbarian, who lives entirely on milk, who has no house, and whose sole means of existence is brigandage, regards all the kings of the earth as his slaves, and insults them regularly twice every day.

PARIS, the 28th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLV.

RICA TO USBEK

At —

YESTERDAY morning, I heard a knock at my door while I was in bed. The door suddenly opened, or rather was driven in, and a man appeared whose acquaintance I had made somewhere or other, and who seemed to me to be a little out of his mind.

His garb was anything but pretentious ; his wig, set awry, had not been even combed ; he had not taken time to sew the rents in his black doublet, and he had evidently renounced, on the present occasion, the precautions wherewith he was wont to disguise the dilapidations of his costume.

"Get up," said he ; "I shall need you the entire day ; I have several purchases to make, and I shall be very glad to do so in your company : first, we must go to the Rue Saint-Honoré and see a notary who is commissioned to sell an estate worth five hundred thousand livres ; I am anxious that he should give me the preference. On my way here, I stopped for a moment at the Faubourg Saint-Germain, in which I have rented a hôtel at two thousand crowns, and I hope to have the contract signed to-day."

I was hardly dressed before he had me downstairs. "Let us begin," he continued, "by purchasing a carriage, and providing whatever is needed for its equipment." And in fact, we not only bought the carriage, but a hundred thousand francs' worth of goods in less than an hour. All this was done promptly, because my gentleman never haggled, never counted, and paid no money. Reflecting upon this, I examined the man and discovered in him a singular intermixture of wealth and poverty, so that I really did not know what to believe. At last I broke silence, and, taking him aside, I said:



"Monsieur, who is to pay for all this?" — "I am," he replied. "Come to my room; I will show you immense treasures, riches envied by the greatest monarchs; but they will not be envied by you, for I intend to share them with you." I followed him. We climbed up five stories, and then, by means of a ladder, managed to creep into a sixth: it contained a closet, open to all the winds of heaven; all its furniture consisted of two or three dozen earthenware basins filled with different liquors. "I got up very early," said he, "and my first act was, as it has been for the last twenty-five years, to visit my work. I saw that the great day had come, the day that was to make me the richest man in the whole world. Do you notice that ruddy liquid? It has now all the qualities required by philosophers for the transmutation of metals. It has enabled me to obtain the grains you see there; they are of pure gold, although a little deficient in weight. The secret which Nicholas Flamel discovered and Raimond Sully, with a thousand others, searched for in vain, is now mine, and I find myself the fortunate possessor of the great mystery. God grant that the use I make of the treasures He has entrusted me with may redound to his glory!"

Transported with anger, I took my departure, or rather hurried downstairs, and left this wealthy person in his garret. Farewell, my dear Usbek, I will call upon you to-morrow, and, if you wish, we shall return together to Paris.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLVI.

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

I MEET with people here who are constantly disputing about religion, and, at the same time, apparently contending as to who shall observe it least.

While these persons cannot be described as better Christians than others, they have no title to be called better citizens either. This latter defect has impressed me strongly ; for, whatever a man's religion may be, the observance of the laws, love of mankind, and respect and affection for one's parents must be essential elements in it.

In fact, ought not the chief object of every religious man to be to please the Divine Power that has established the religion he professes? ~~But the surest method of succeeding in this respect is undoubtedly to comply with the laws of society and fulfil our duties towards humanity.~~ For if we are persuaded of the truth of the religion in which we live, we must be equally persuaded that God loves men, since He has established a religion for the purpose of rendering them happy. Now if He loves men, we are sure of pleasing Him, if we love them also ; and this love of ours will consist in the practice of all the duties of charity and humanity towards them, and in our avoidance of every breach of the law under which they live.

We are far likelier to please God in this way than by the observance of any particular ceremony ; for ceremonies in themselves have no inherent goodness ; they are only relatively good, and depend for their value on the supposition that God has ordained them. This is a subject that must give rise to endless discussion and to much self-deception as well ; for the ceremonies of one religion must be selected from amongst those of two thousand.

There was once a man who prayed every day to God in this fashion : " Lord, I do not understand the endless disputes that are carried on with regard to Thy nature. I would serve Thee according to Thy will ; but every man I consult would have me serve Thee according to his. When I wish to say my prayers, I neither know in what language I should address Thee nor what posture I should assume. One tells me I must pray standing ; another declares I must be seated, and a third requires me to fall on my knees. Nay, there are some who assert that I must wash every morning in cold water, while others affirm that Thou wilt regard me with horror, if I do not cut away a small portion of my flesh. I chanced to be eating a hare the other day in a caravansary : three men who were near by, caused me the utmost alarm ; they all maintained that I had grievously offended : one,¹ because the animal was unclean ; another,² because it had been strangled ; a third,³ because it was not a fish. A Brahmin, who was passing, and whom I requested to decide the matter, said : ' They are all wrong ; for you did not, apparently, kill this animal yourself.' — ' Yes, I killed it,' I answered. — ' Ah ! you have committed an abominable deed, and one which God will never pardon,' said he to me, in a severe tone. ' How do you know but that the soul of your father has passed into that animal ?'

" All these things, O Lord, perplex me to a degree that is hardly conceivable. I cannot move my head without some one proclaiming in threatening tones that I have sinned against Thee ; and yet, I would wish to please Thee and devote the life Thou hast given me to that end. I do not know but I may be mistaken ; still, I believe the best means to attain this object is to live as a good citizen in the society in which Thou hast decreed I should be born, and as a good father in the family Thou hast given me."

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Chahban, 1713.

¹ A Jew.

² A Turk.

³ An Armenian.

LETTER XLVII.
ZACHI TO USBEK
AT PARIS.

I HAVE an important communication to make to you: I have become reconciled to Zephis, and the seraglio, until now divided by our quarrel, is again united. Peace again reigns amongst us, and nothing is wanting to our contentment but your presence. Return, my dear Usbek, return, and let love be once more triumphant in this abode.

I gave a magnificent banquet in honor of Zephis, to which your mother, your wives, and your principal concubines were invited; your aunts and several of your female cousins were present also; they came on horseback, enveloped in the thick clouds of their veils and garments.

We set out for the country on the following day, where we hoped to have more freedom. We mounted our camels, four of us being in each palanquin. As we had made no previous preparation for the party, we had not time to have the *courouc* proclaimed; but our ever vigilant first eunuch took another precaution: to the cloth that concealed us, he added a thick curtain, and so it was absolutely impossible for any one to see us.

When we reached that river which it is necessary to cross, we entered a box, according to the usual custom, which was carried over in the boat; for we were told that the river was crowded with people. An inquisitive fellow, who came too near our retreat, was cut down and forever deprived of the light of day; the same fate awaited another found bathing naked on the bank; these two unfortunates were sacrificed by your faithful eunuchs to your honor and to ours.

But listen to the rest of our adventures. When we were in the middle of the river, there arose such a fierce wind,

and clouds so terrific covered the sky, that our sailors began to despair. Frightened by this peril, we almost all fainted away. I remember hearing the voices of the eunuchs raised in dispute ; some declared we should be warned of our danger ; but their chief asserted positively that, rather than his master should be thus dishonored, he preferred death, and that he would plunge a dagger into the heart of the next who should dare to utter such an audacious proposal. One of my slaves, who was quite beside herself, ran to me undressed with offers of assistance ; but a black eunuch seized her roughly and flung her back where she came from. Then I became unconscious, and returned to life only when all the alarm was over.

What a state of perplexity such journeys create for us women ! Men are exposed only to those perils that threaten their lives, but we are every moment in danger of losing our lives or our virtue. Adieu, dear Usbek. I shall always adore you.

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 2d of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER XLVIII.

USBEC TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THOSE who are devoted to the task of self-culture are never idle ; although not engaged on any business of importance, yet am I constantly occupied. I spend my time in observing ; what I have noticed, seen, or heard during the day, I write down at night ; everything is to me a source of interest and astonishment : I am like a child, whose organs, still susceptible, easily receive the impress of the most trifling objects. You would, perhaps, scarcely believe it, but we are well received in all circles and among all classes ; I think this is largely due to the fact that the quick wit and natural gayety of Rica make society as fond of him as he is of soci-

ety. Our foreign appearance no longer offends anybody; in fact, we rather enjoy the surprise exhibited on the discovery that we are not destitute of refinement, — for the French have an idea that our climate does not produce real men. It must, however, be confessed that they are well worth the trouble of being undeceived.

I spent a few days in a country mansion near Paris, in the society of a man of some distinction who is very fond of having company at his place. He has a charming wife, whose modesty is enhanced by a vivacity quite foreign to the retired life of our Persian ladies.

Being a foreigner, I had nothing better to do than study, according to my usual custom, the crowd of people who were constantly arriving, and who successively afforded new types of character for my notice. I was much pleased with the unassuming deportment of the first person I remarked. We were mutually attracted, so that we found ourselves always together.

One day when we happened to be conversing apart in a large company, and paying no attention to what was going on around us, I said to him: "At the risk of being thought more inquisitive than polite, I must request your permission to ask a few questions; for my ignorance of everything is to me a terrible annoyance, and to live with people I cannot understand is a source of vexation. My mind has been much exercised during the last two days; not a single one of the men before us but has placed me on the rack more than two hundred times, and yet it would take me more than a thousand years to comprehend them; they are to me more invisible than the wives of our great monarch." — "You need only speak," he answered, "and I will give you all the information you desire. I shall have the less hesitation in doing so that I believe you a man of discretion, who will not abuse my confidence." — "Who is that man," said I, "who has described to us at such length the splendid banquets he

has given to the great ; who is so familiar with your dukes, and converses on easy terms with your ministers, — though the latter, I am told, are not at all easy of access? He must be a personage of high rank ; and yet he is so mean-looking that he certainly does no credit to the rank to which he belongs ; besides, I have found him very uncultivated. Although I am a foreigner, I am inclined to believe that there is a certain refinement common to all nations ; but I have been unable to discover any of it in this case. Can it be that men of rank are more ill-bred than others?" — "That man," he replied with a smile, "is a farmer-general. He is as much superior to the present company in wealth as he is beneath it in birth. He might have the best society in Paris at his dinners, if he consented to be absent from them himself. He is a very offensive person, as you see, but then he has an excellent cook ; nor is he ungrateful to this functionary, for you heard him praise him just now."

"And that big man in black," I continued, "whom yonder lady has placed near her, how is it his costume is so lugubrious, while his demeanor is so airy and his complexion so florid? He has a gracious smile for all who address him. His garb is more modest, but more carefully arranged than that of your wives." — "He is," was the reply, "a preacher, and, what is still worse, a confessor. Such as you see him, he knows more about the affairs of men's wives than their husbands ; he is acquainted with the weaknesses of women ; they also know his." — "How is it," I inquired, "that he is always speaking of something he calls 'grace'?" — "No, not always," he returned ; "to a pretty woman he is fonder of speaking of the fall therefrom ; he is a boanerges in public, but in private mild as a lamb." — "He seems to be treated with much distinction and a great deal of reverence," I remarked. — "Treated with distinction ! Why, he is the one man necessary ! he gives a zest to a lonely life, is full of little counsels, little attentions, and has a regular time for

visiting ; he cures a headache better than any one in the world ; he is an excellent man."

"If I am not becoming too troublesome, would you inform me who is the man in front of us? He is very badly dressed, makes grimaces sometimes, and speaks a language different from that of the others. He has not wit enough to talk, but talks to show that he has." — "That grotesque specimen of humanity," he answered, "is a poet. Such fellows as that say that they are born what they are, which is true, — quite as true as that they are born to be almost always the laughing-stock of the human race ; so they are not spared ; in fact, they are the objects of universal contempt. Hunger has brought the person you speak of into this house ; he is well received by its master and mistress, for their good nature makes them courteous to everybody. He wrote an epithalamium on their marriage ; it is the best thing he has done during his life, for the marriage turned out as happy as he had predicted.

"With your Oriental prejudices," he added, "you would not, perhaps, believe that there are happy marriages among us, and wives who require no guardian but their virtue. The people of this house enjoy undisturbed peace ; they are loved and esteemed by everybody. I have only one fault to find with them, and that is the result of their natural goodness, which leads them to admit all sorts of people into their house, so that society here is sometimes rather mixed. And yet I do not blame them, after all ; we must be content to live with people such as they are. With many persons good-breeding is only a varnish that hides their vices ; it may be said to resemble poisons, — the more subtle they are, the more dangerous they are."

"And that old man," I whispered, "who looks so sullen? I took him at first for a foreigner ; for, besides that he is dressed so queerly, he censures everything done in France, and speaks with disapproval of your government." — "He is an old warrior," he answered, "who tires out every one that

listens to him with the interminable story of his exploits. He will not allow that France has ever won a battle in which he was not present, or hear of a siege in which he did not mount the breach. He believes himself so necessary an element in our history that he imagines it came to a close when he ceased to take part in it. He regards the wounds he has received as marking the dissolution of the monarchy, and, unlike those philosophers who say the present is alone enjoyable and the past is nothing, he enjoys nothing but the past, and exists only in the campaigns in which he was engaged. His aspirations are all towards the past, just of those of real heroes must be all towards the future." — "But why," I inquired, "has he left the service?" — "He has not left the service," my friend answered, "but the service has left him; he has been appointed to a small post, where he will recount his exploits for the rest of his days; but he will never rise higher: the road to distinction is closed against him." — "And why?" I said. — "We have a maxim in France that officers should never be advanced whose patience has been worn out as subalterns. We regard such persons as men whose intellect has been cramped by detail, and whose very familiarity with little things renders them incapable of great ones. We believe that an officer who has not the qualities of a general at thirty will never have them; that he who cannot at a glance embrace all the different possibilities of a field of battle and all its different situations over a circuit of several leagues, and has not the presence of mind to turn to account all the advantages of a victory and minimize all the disadvantages of a defeat, will never acquire the efficiency needed. Such being the case, we employ men of heroic genius and courage in positions where their grand and sublime characteristics have full play; while for men of inferior capacity we have inferior posts. To the latter class belong those who have grown old in obscure wars; at the best of times, they are never successful except in what they have

been doing all their lives ; and it would not be wise to give them fresh employment at the very time when their powers are becoming enfeebled."

A moment after, my curiosity was excited anew, and I said : " I promise not to ask you another question if you answer this one. Who is that tall young man who wears his own hair, and is more remarkable for assurance than wit ? How is it that he speaks louder than any one else, and evidently believes himself so popular a member of society ? " — " He is a lady-killer," he replied. While he was speaking, some people entered, others rose and left, and, an acquaintance of my friend having joined him, I had to remain in my ignorance. But, by some chance or other, the young man was by my side a moment afterward. He entered into conversation at once : " The weather is fine ; would you mind taking a turn in the garden ? " I made him a civil answer, and we went out. " I have come into the country," said he, " to please the mistress of the house, with whom I am not on bad terms by any means. Another lady of my acquaintance will raise the mischief on account of this visit ; but what is one to do ? I am intimate with the prettiest women in Paris, but I do not confine myself to one, so they have a nice time looking after me ; for, between you and me, I am a devil of a fellow." — " Apparently, monsieur," I observed, " you hold some office or employment that prevents you from being more assiduous in your attentions." — " No, I have no employment except that of driving husbands and fathers crazy. I like alarming a woman who thinks she has got me, and bringing her within an inch of losing me. I belong to a set of young blades who divide up Paris amongst them, and have all the city wondering what we'll do next." — " As far as I understand, then," I replied, " you make more noise than the most valiant warrior, and are more regarded than a grave magistrate. If you were in Persia, you would not enjoy all these advantages ; you would be





Ch. 17. The King's Court.

F. B. Jones.

thought better adapted to guard our women than to please them." My face reddened with anger ; and I believe, if I had continued speaking, I must have affronted the fellow.

What do you say of a country where such people are tolerated, and the followers of such a pursuit are allowed to live ; where infidelity, treason, rape, perfidy, and injustice lead to distinction ; where a man is esteemed because he tears a daughter from the arms of her father, a wife from her husband, and introduces misery into the purest and happiest homes ? Blessed are the children of Ali, who protect their daughters from disgrace and seduction ! The light of day is not more unsullied than the fire that burns in the hearts of our wives ; our daughters tremble when they think of the day that is to deprive them of that virtue which makes them like unto the angels and the spiritual powers. Beloved land of my birth, on which the sun sheds his earliest beams, thou art not stained with the horrible crimes which compel that luminary to hide his rays as he approaches the gloomy West !

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER XLIX.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

THE other day came a dervish into my room, dressed in extraordinary fashion : his beard descended to his waist ; he was bare-footed ; his dress was of gray, coarse and peaked in certain places. His entire figure appeared to me so queer that I had an idea of sending for a painter to get him to make a sketch of it. He began by paying me an elaborate compliment, and informing me that he was a man of merit, and a Capuchin as well. " I have been told, monsieur," he

added, "that you are about to return to the court of Persia, in which you hold a distinguished rank. I have come to ask your protection, and to beg you to obtain from your king a little establishment near Casbin for two or three of our monks." — "You are thinking then, father, of going to Persia?" I answered. "I, monsieur!" he exclaimed, "I shall take very good care I don't. I am Provincial here, and I would not barter my position for all the Capuchins in the world." — "And what the devil do you mean by making such a request then?" — "Because," he replied, "if we had such a monastery, our Italian fathers would send two or three monks thither." — "Apparently you are acquainted with these monks?" — "No, monsieur, I do not know them." — "You don't know them! Then what the mischief does it matter to you whether they go to Persia or not? A nice project this, of sending a pair of Capuchins to breathe the air of Casbin! so useful to Europe and Asia, eh? Quite a scheme to excite the interest of monarchs! This is what you call planting your fine colonies, is it? Get out! You and your sort are not made for transportation, and you would do well to continue to creep along in the places where you have been engendered."

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER L

RICA TO ———,

I HAVE known people to whom virtue was so natural that they were not aware of its presence: they fulfilled their duties spontaneously, and were induced to do so as it were from instinct. Very far from ever speaking of their incomparable qualities, it would seem as if the conception of them had never entered their minds. These are the sort of peo-

ple I love, and not those virtuous men who always seem to be in a state of astonishment at their own virtue, and regard a good action as a marvel, the recital of which ought to create wonder.

If modesty is a virtue, necessary even in those on whom Heaven has bestowed rare talents, what are we to say of those insects that dare to display a pride which would dishonor the greatest men?

I see persons on every side who speak incessantly of themselves : their conversation is a mirror that always reflects their own impertinent features ; they will tell you of the most insignificant trifles that happen to them, apparently under the impression that the interest they take in them will increase their own importance in your eyes ; they have done everything, seen everything, said everything, and thought everything ; they are a model for human kind, a subject of inexhaustible comparison, a source of precedents that never runs dry. Oh ! how tasteless are eulogies that reflect the source from which they come !

A few days ago, a man of this class overwhelmed us for two long hours with details about himself, his merit and his abilities ; but as there is no such thing as perpetual motion in the world, he had to stop speaking. We had a chance then to engage in the conversation, and you may be sure we seized it.

A man who appeared to be in rather an ill-temper, began by complaining of the boredom of conversations in general. "What ! are fools the only persons who dwell on their own characters and make everything centre about themselves?" — "You are right," answered our chatterer, bluntly : "no one acts as I do ; I never praise myself ; I am wealthy, well-born, generous with my money, and my friends say that my intellect is of a rather superior quality ; but yet you never hear me speaking of all this : I value my modesty more highly than any good qualities I may happen to possess."

No wonder this audacious braggart amazed me, and, while he was talking aloud, I was whispering to myself: "Happy the man who has vanity enough to keep him from praising himself, who fears the ridicule of those who listen to him, and never nettles the pride of others by displaying his own!"

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER LI.

NARGUM, PERSIAN ENVOY IN MUSCOVY,

TO USBEK AT PARIS.

I HAVE been informed in letters from Ispahan that you had left Persia and were actually in Paris. How is it that I learn such news from others and not from yourself?

The orders of the King of Kings have kept me for five years in this country, where I have terminated several important negotiations.

You know that the czar is the only Christian prince whose interests are connected with ours, because he is, like us, an enemy of the Turks.

His empire is more extensive than ours, for it is reckoned that the distance between Moscow and the last of his possessions in the Chinese frontiers is two thousand leagues.

He is the absolute master of the property and lives of his subjects, who are all slaves, with the exception of four families. The lieutenant of the prophets, the King of Kings, whose footstool is the heavens, does not exercise a more formidable sway.

Any one acquainted with the horrible climate of Moscow would never imagine that to be exiled from it was a very severe penalty; still, whenever a great man is disgraced, he is banished to Siberia.

Just as the law of our prophet forbids us to drink wine, so the law of their prince forbids the Muscovites.

Their way of receiving their guests is not at all Persian. As soon as a stranger enters a house, the husband presents his wife to him; the stranger is expected to kiss her as a mark of courtesy to the husband.

Although fathers usually stipulate in the marriage-contract that the husband shall not whip their daughters, yet you have no idea how fond the Muscovite women are of being beaten. They think they have lost the affection of their husband if he does not now and then give them a sound whipping; any other conduct would argue unpardonable indifference on his part. The following is a letter a woman wrote lately to her mother :—

“MY DEAR MOTHER :— I am the most unfortunate woman in the world. I do everything I can to win the love of my husband, but without success. On yesterday, although I had a thousand things to attend to in the house, I went outside and stayed away all day. I was sure he would give me a good thrashing on my return, but he never said a word. My sister is treated in quite a different manner: the life is nearly cudgelled out of her every day; if she looks at a man, her husband knocks her down on the spot; that tells you how fond they are of each other, and in what harmony they live.

“So, naturally, she is as proud as a peacock; but she shall not look down upon me much longer; I am determined to make my husband love me, no matter what the consequences. I’ll make him that mad that he’ll have to show me some token of affection, whether he likes it or not. No one shall say that I am never beaten, and live in my own house without any one ever minding me. I will scream out in such a way, if he gives me the least little tap, that everybody will be sure things are as they ought to be, and if the neighbors come to my aid I will strangle them. I want you, my dear mother, to tell my husband how scandalously he is behaving to me. My father, who is a gentleman, never behaved so; in fact, I remember thinking,

when I was a girl, that he loved you just a little too much. I embrace you, my dear mother."

The Muscovites are not allowed to leave their country, even to travel. Being thus separated from other nations by the laws of their own, they are the more firmly attached to all their ancient customs, because they do not see how they can have any others.

But their present ruler has wished to change all this; he has had a lively quarrel with them on the subject of their beards; the monks and clergy, with whom he has also a dispute, have stood up for their ignorance valiantly.

He makes every effort to spread the arts among his subjects, and is trying to extend the fame of his people throughout Europe and Asia, — a people until now almost unknown to the world, and only conscious of its own existence.

Restless and excited, he wanders through his vast dominions, leaving everywhere the impress of his natural severity.

Then he abandons them, as if they were too small to contain him, and goes rambling through Europe in search of other provinces and kingdoms.

I embrace you, my dear Usbek, and beg you to send me news of yourself.

Moscow, the 2d of the moon of Chalval, 1713.

LETTER LII.

RICA TO USBEK

AT —

I WAS much amused in a company I was in the other day. There were women of all ages present: one of eighty, one of sixty, and one of forty, who had a niece somewhere about twenty or twenty-two. Instinct brought me to the

side of the latter, who whispered in my ear: "What do you say to my aunt, who wishes to have lovers and play the beauty at her age?"—"She is wrong," I answered; "such an idea is natural only in you." A moment after, I found myself near the aunt, who said to me: "What do you say to that woman who is at least sixty, and spends hours at her toilet?"—"It is time lost," I answered; "such a waste of the precious hours would only be excusable in a lady who possesses your charms." I approached the unfortunate dame of sixty, and was pitying her from my soul, when she whispered to me: "Did you ever see anything so ridiculous? Just imagine a woman of eighty wearing flame-colored ribbons! She is trying to pass for a young person, and she is passably successful, for that is indicative of second childhood."

"Good Heavens!" I said to myself, "must we always have such keen perceptions of the follies of others and never of our own? Perhaps," I thought afterwards, "there is a kind of happiness in deriving consolation from the weaknesses of our neighbor." However, I felt inclined for amusement, and I said, still to myself: "We have climbed high enough; let us now get down, first beginning, however, with the old lady on top." I turned and addressed her: "Madame, you bear such a strong resemblance to the lady I have just been speaking to, that I fancy you must be sisters, and about the same age."—"Indeed, monsieur, you are very near the truth. When one of us dies, the other will have good cause for alarm, for I don't suppose there are two days' difference between our ages." Leaving this decrepit creature, I went to our woman of sixty: "Madame," I said, "you will have the goodness to decide a bet I have made; I have wagered that that lady (pointing to the dame of forty) and you were of the same age."—"Well, I give you my word, I don't believe there are six days between us." Good, so far; let us get on. I descended the ladder another step, and re-

turned to the woman of forty. "Are you really serious, my dear madame," I asked, "in calling that young lady at the next table your niece? You look as young as she does. There is a certain faded expression on her face which is absent from yours, and then the brilliancy of your complexion—" "Listen," she replied, "I am her aunt, but her mother was twenty-five years older than I. My deceased sister and I had not the same father, and I have heard her say that her daughter was born the same year I was."

"Just what I told my friend; you see my surprise was natural, madame, when he asserted the contrary."

My dear Usbek, women who feel the time approaching when they must bid farewell to their charms, have a natural longing to push back their years. And is it any wonder they try to deceive others, since they use such efforts to deceive themselves, and rid their minds of the most painful of all ideas?

PARIS, the 3d of the moon of Chalval, 1713.

LETTER LIIL

ZELIS TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

NEVER has a passion been more violent and impetuous than that of the eunuch Cosrou for my slave Zelida. He asks her in marriage with such ardor that I cannot refuse him. And why should I object when her mother does not, and even Zelida herself appears to be satisfied with this delusive connection, and with the empty shadow of reality that is offered her?

What can she do with this poor wretch who will have nothing belonging to a husband except jealousy; whose coldness will abandon him only to leave an impotent de-

spair in its place ; who, by recalling the memory of what he has been, will always bring to her mind the sense of what he is no longer ; who, ever ready to possess, but never possessing, will delude himself and delude her unceasingly, and will every moment be making her have practical experience of all the wretchedness of her condition ?

What ! to be always the prey of semblances and deceptions ; to live only in imagination ; to find oneself always on the brink of pleasure, but never in it ; to languish in the arms of an unfortunate, and respond to his regrets instead of to his sighs ?

What contempt we should feel for a man of that species, made solely to guard and not to possess. I seek love, and I do not see it.

I speak to you freely, because you prefer my artless, frank ways and my fondness for pleasure to the affected modesty of my companions.

I have heard you say a thousand times that eunuchs do have a certain voluptuous enjoyment with women that is unknown to us ; that Nature makes up to them for their loss ; that she has resources which supply the defect in their condition ; that it is quite possible to lose manhood, and yet have desire ; and that, when a human being is in this state, he acquires as it were a third sense, and exchanges one kind of pleasure for another.

If I could think so, I should feel less pity for Zelida ; there is a certain amount of compensation in living with people who are not so unfortunate as you thought them.

Give me your orders on this matter, and let me know whether you wish the marriage to take place in the seraglio. Adieu.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 5th of the moon of Chalval, 1713.

LETTER LIV.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

I WAS this morning in my room, which, as you know, is separated from the others by only a thin partition, pierced in several places, so that you can hear all that goes on in the neighboring chamber. Thus, I heard a man, who was striding up and down the floor, saying to another: "I don't know how it is, but everything seems to turn against me. For the last three days I have never said a single thing that could reflect any particular credit upon me, and I have found myself lost in a crowd of talkers, not one of whom paid the slightest attention to me or addressed a single word to me. I had prepared some brilliant sallies to enliven my discourse; they never gave me an opportunity of firing them off. I had a charming little story to tell; whenever I turned the conversation into a channel that would render it appropriate, they got away from it, evidently on set purpose. Some first-rate witticisms have been growing stale in my head for the last four days, and no chance of making use of them. If this sort of thing continues, it will surely drive me crazy. I must have been born under an unlucky star; there is no other way of accounting for it. Yesterday, I had a chance to shine in the company of three or four old women, and certainly they gave me a clear field. It took me more than a quarter of an hour to lead up to what I wanted to say; but even they failed to follow me, and, like the fatal sisters, cut the thread of my discourse. I tell you it is no easy thing to keep up a reputation for wit. By the way, my friend, how did you manage to attain it?"

"I have an idea on the subject," replied the other.
 "What if we were to work in concert, and form a partnership

for the production of good things? We shall each agree every day upon what we are to speak about, and we shall be so mutually helpful that, should any one attempt to interrupt us in the midst of our conversation, we shall shut him off, and, if he persists, we shall use violence. We shall arrange the several places at which one of us must express approval, or laugh quietly or break into a roar. With such a system, we are sure to give the tone to every conversation, and gain quite a reputation for the sprightliness of our wit and the success of our repartees; we can also settle on a system of head-shakes that will be of great advantage. You will shine one day, and on the next you will simply second my efforts. We shall enter a house together, and I shall cry out, at the same time pointing to you: 'I must tell you of a capital retort made by this gentleman to a man we met in the street.' Then, turning to you, I shall remark: 'He never expected such a pointed answer, he must have been neatly surprised.' I shall repeat one of my poems, and you will say: 'I was present when he made it; it was at a supper, and he turned it off in a jiffy.' Sometimes we shall rally each other, and people will exclaim: 'Don't they hit each other cleverly! What a thrust! and how well parried! is n't it fine! Faith, they don't spare each other! I wonder how he'll meet that stroke! But he has met it! and with what skill! Why, it's a regular battle!' No need to tell them that we practised the whole thing the night before. We must buy certain jest-books intended for those who have no wit, but would like people to think they have: everything depends on having the proper models to go by. Before six months, we ought to be in a condition to maintain a conversation for a full hour entirely made up of *bons-mots*. But we must mind one thing especially: that is, not to let them drop out of sight after they are uttered. It is not enough to produce a good thing; it should be spread and scattered in every direction. Except we do this, all is lost. Nothing is so heart-breaking



as to see some first-class joke die in the ears of the fool who has heard it. Of course, for this calamity there is some compensation in the fact that the foolish things we say ourselves are also quickly forgotten ; it is the only consolation we have for our misfortune in the other case. And now, my dear friend, you see the course that is before us. Adopt my plan, and I promise you a place in the Academy before six months. Nor will your labor be very much protracted ; you can then abandon your art, and yet always be esteemed a man of wit, whatever you do. You know that when a man in France enters any society, he is at once supported by what is called the *esprit des corps* ; such will be your fate, and all I am afraid of is that you may be ruined by all the applause you will receive."

PARIS, the 6th of the moon of Zilcade, 1714.

LETTER I.V.

RICA TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

AMONG Europeans, the first quarter of an hour after marriage smoothes all difficulties. The last favors are always contemporary with the nuptial benediction ; the women here are not like the women of Persia, who dispute the ground for several months ; they surrender on the spot ; and, if they lose nothing, it is because they have nothing to lose. But, O shameful thing ! the moment of their defeat is always known, and without consulting the stars, it is always possible to predict the exact hour of their children's birth.

The French never speak of their wives ; the reason is, they are afraid to speak about them before persons who are better acquainted with them than they are themselves.

There are amongst them certain very unfortunate individuals whom nobody thinks of consoling : these are the jealous

husbands, — persons whom every one hates ; they are the jealous husbands, — persons whom all men scorn ; they are, once more, the jealous husbands.

Consequently, there is no country in the world where the number of jealous husbands is so small as in France. Their tranquillity is not based on the confidence they have in their wives ; it is, on the contrary, based on the ill opinion they have of them. All the wise precautions of the Asiatics, — the veils wherewith they are covered, the prisons in which they are confined, the eunuchs who watch over them, — appear to them means better calculated to exercise than to weary the astuteness of the sex. Here husbands accept their appointed destiny with a good grace, and regard the infidelities of their wives as mishaps decreed by the higher powers. A husband who wished to possess his wife to the exclusion of everybody else would be considered a disturber of the public happiness, a madman, who desired to deprive others of the light of the sun that he might enjoy it alone.

Here, if a husband loves his wife, it is a proof that he has not sufficient merit to win the love of another woman ; who abuses the power given him by the law to supply those pleasures he cannot otherwise obtain ; who avails himself of all his advantages to the prejudice of society at large ; who appropriates to his own use what has been only given him as a pledge, and who does everything in his power to upset a tacit convention essential to the happiness of both sexes. The reputation of having a handsome wife, which is so carefully concealed in Asia, is borne here without any anxiety : there is always the satisfaction of being able to make an attack in some other quarter. A prince consoles himself for the loss of one fortress by the capture of another. When the Turks took Bagdad from us, did not we in turn take Candahar from the Mogul ?

As a rule, the man who bears patiently the infidelities of his wife is not regarded with disapproval ; on the con-

trary, he is praised for his prudence ; only in certain peculiar cases is he felt to have incurred any reproach.

It is not that there are no virtuous women ; there are, and they are persons of much distinction also ; my friendly guide always pointed them out to me ; but they were all so ugly that one would have to be a saint not to hate virtue.

After all I have told you about the morals of this country, you can easily imagine the French do not pride themselves on their constancy : they believe that it is as ridiculous to swear eternal devotion to a woman, as it is to insist that health and happiness are going to last forever. When they promise a woman that they will always love her, they do so with the proviso that she must be always lovable ; and, if she breaks her word, they do not think they are bound to keep theirs.

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of Zilcade, 1714.

LETTER LVI.

USBK TO IBEN

AT SMYRNA.

GAMBLING is very common in Europe ; in fact, it is a profession which places those who cultivate it on a level with men of birth, property, and honor. They are accepted as gentlemen without any inquiry, although every one knows that, in most cases, such an assumption is altogether a mistaken one ; but there are some people whose opinions it is useless trying to correct.

But the women are the most inveterate gamblers of all. It is true that in their youth the attractions of a more enthralling passion to a great extent monopolize their attention ; but the older they grow, the more youthful and ardent

does their devotion to play become, and when all other passions have left them, this one fills the void.

They wish to ruin their husbands, and, in order to achieve success, they adopt means suitable to all ages, from callow youth to decrepit age. Dress and luxurious display begin the disorder which gallantry increases and gambling completes.

I have often seen nine or ten women, or rather nine or ten centuries, ranged around a table ; I have seen them in their hopes and in their fears, in their joys, and, above all, in their rages. You would have said that never again could they have a peaceful moment, and that life and despair would both leave them together ; you would have doubted whether those they paid were their creditors or their legatees.

It would seem as if our holy prophet made it his special object to deprive us of whatever is calculated to disturb the reason : he has interdicted the use of wine, which overturns it ; he has forbidden games of chance ; and, as it was impossible to remove the most imperious passion of all, he has brought it under control. Amongst us love produces neither disturbance nor madness ; it is a languishing passion which never troubles the calmness of the soul ; the plurality of wives saves us from the domination of woman, and moderates the violence of our desires.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Zilhage, 1714.

LETTER LVII.

USBK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THE libertines in this place support an infinite number of courtesans, and the devotees an immense crowd of dervishes.

These dervishes take three vows : of obedience, poverty, and chastity. The first is said to be the one most faithfully observed ; as to the second, I am pretty positive that it is not observed by any means ; and, as to the third, you can judge for yourself.

But, however rich these dervishes may be, they never renounce the titular attribute of poverty ; our glorious sultan would as soon think of renouncing his sublime and magnificent titles. They are right ; for this attribute of poverty prevents them from ever being poor.

The physicians and some of these dervishes, who are called confessors, are here always too much esteemed or too much despised ; still, it is said that heirs rather prefer the physicians to the confessors.

I went the other day to one of the convents of these dervishes. One of them, a man venerable for his white hair, received me very courteously, and, after conducting me through the house, led me into the garden, where we entered into conversation. " Father," I asked him, " what post do you fill in this community ? " — " Monsieur," he replied, looking well pleased at my question, " I am a casuist. " — " Casuist ? " I repeated ; " as long as I have been in France, I have never heard of such an office as that. " — " What ! you do not know what a casuist is ? Well, listen, and I will give you an explanation that will fully satisfy you. (There are two kinds of sins, mortal and venial ; mortal sins exclude us from Paradise absolutely ; venial sins are, indeed, offensive to God, but not to such a degree as to deprive us of eternal happiness. Now, all our art consists in distinguishing between these two sorts of sins ; for, if you leave out some free-thinkers, all Christians wish to gain Paradise, but there is no one who does not wish to gain it as cheaply as possible. When we know what sins are mortal, we try not to commit them, and the matter is settled. Many men do not aspire after great perfection, and as they are not ambitious they

are not anxious to occupy the best seats ; consequently, they would enter Paradise on as easy terms as possible ; all they care for is to get there, and they do not want to do either more or less than is necessary for that purpose. There are people who would take Heaven by storm rather than not obtain it, and who say to God : ‘ Lord, I have fulfilled all the conditions ; you cannot help keeping your promises ; as I have not done more than you have asked, I excuse you from granting me more than you have promised.’

“ We are, therefore, indispensable, monsieur. I will also enlighten you on another important matter : the deed does not constitute the crime, but rather the knowledge of him who commits it. The man who does what is wrong, as long as he believes it is not wrong, has a safe conscience ; and, as an infinite number of acts are doubtful, a casuist can give them a certain degree of goodness, by distinguishing their qualities ; and if he can persuade people that they have no malice, they cease to be sinful, as far as the persons committing them are concerned.

“ I have now explained to you the mystery of the craft in which I have grown old, in all its refinements ; it is possible to give a twist to everything, even to those things that appear to be least susceptible of it.”

“ All this, father,” I answered, “ is very fine ; but how do you manage to settle these matters with Heaven ? If the Great Sophy had at his court a man like you, who would treat him as you treat God, and say which of his orders might be observed and which not, and who would teach his subjects in what cases they might obey them and in what cases they might violate them, he would have him impaled on the spot.” Thereupon, I saluted my dervish, and turned on my heel, without waiting for an answer.

PARIS, the 23d of the moon of Maharram, 1714.

LETTER LVIII.

RICA TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THERE are many trades, my dear Rhedi, in Paris. Now an obliging individual approaches you and offers, for a mere trifle, to let you into the secret of making gold. Another promises that he will enable you to sleep with the spirits of the air, provided that you only keep thirty years without seeing a woman.

And, then, you will meet with soothsayers who will tell you everything that occurred during your life, provided they have just a quarter of an hour's conversation with your servants.

There are skilful women who turn virginity into a flower that withers and is revived every day, and is gathered for the hundredth time more painfully than at first.

There are others who repair, by the excellence of their art, all the ravages of time, can restore to a face a beauty that is passing away, and can make a woman descend from the summit of old age to the freshness of youth.

All these people live, or try to live, in a city which is the mother of invention.

The incomes of the citizens cannot be farmed : they consist of stratagem and trickery ; each has his own, and does as well with it as he can.

It would be as easy to number the sands of the sea or the slaves of our monarch as to reckon up the lawyers who live upon the revenues of some mosque or other.

A countless multitude of professors of languages, arts, and sciences teach what they do not know ; and their talent is not to be despised : for it requires much less wit to tell what a person knows than to teach what he is ignorant of.

It is impossible to die here, except suddenly ; death has no other way of exercising his authority, because in every corner there are people who have infallible remedies for all imaginable diseases.

All the shops are provided with invisible nets in which the customers are caught ; sometimes, however, a person manages to escape from them cheaply. A young saleswoman will coax a man a whole hour in order to get him to buy a package of toothpicks.

You will hardly find any one who does not leave this city a wiser man than when he entered it. By dint of lavishing his money on others, he at last learns to keep a tight hold of it. It is the only advantage foreigners have in this bewitching city.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Saphar, 1714.

LETTER LIX.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

I WAS the other day in a house where the people assembled were of a very mixed class. I found that two old women, who had been vainly spending all the morning in trying to make themselves look young, had managed to monopolize the whole conversation. "It must be confessed," said one of them, "that the men of to-day are very different from those we knew in our youth : they were refined, courteous, and obliging, but at present their rudeness is insupportable." "Everything is changed," said an old fellow who appeared to be crippled with the gout ; "times are not what they were. Why, forty years ago, everybody was in good health ; gayety and cheerfulness were the order of the day ; people thought of nothing but dancing and singing ; now an intolerable

sadness reigns everywhere." A moment after, the conversation turned on politics. "Zounds!" cried an old lord, "the state is no longer governed; find me a minister like Monsieur Colbert! I knew him well, I can tell you. He was one of my friends, and always saw that my pension was paid before that of anybody else: what a grand financier he was! He set every one at his ease, while to-day I am ruined." — "Monsieur," continued an ecclesiastic, "you are speaking of the most marvellous period in the reign of our invincible monarch. Was anything ever grander than what he did for the extermination of heresy?" — "And then consider what he did to abolish duels," said a man with a self-satisfied air, who had not yet spoken. "A judicious remark," whispered some one in my ear; "that man is delighted with the edict, and obeys it so well that six months ago he let himself be soundly cudgelled rather than violate it."

It seems to me, Usbek, that our judgment of things is always controlled by the secret influence they have had on our own actions. I am not surprised that the negroes paint the devil with a face of dazzling whiteness, and their gods as black as coal; that the Venus of certain tribes has breasts that hang down to her thighs; and, in fine, that all nations have represented their gods in the human form, and have supposed them to be imbued with their own passions. It has been very well said that if triangles were to make a god for themselves, they would give him three sides.

My dear Usbek, when I behold men who crawl about on an atom, — for that is what the earth is, being merely a point in the universe, — when, I repeat, I behold men setting themselves up as models for Providence, I find it impossible to imagine how such extravagance can be combined with such littleness.

PARIS, the 14th of the moon of Saphar, 1714.

LETTER LX.

USBK TO IBSEN

AT SMYRNA.

You ask me if there are any Jews in France. Know that where there is money, there are Jews. You ask me what they do. Just what they do in Persia; nothing resembles an Asiatic Jew more than a European one.

They display among Christians, as well as among ourselves, a stubborn and invincible devotion to their religion that amounts to madness.

The Jewish religion is an old trunk that has produced two branches which have covered the whole earth,—I mean Mahometanism and Christianity; or rather she is the mother of two daughters who have tortured her with multitudinous wounds; for the religions that are the most closely related are always the bitterest enemies. But notwithstanding the cruel treatment she has received from her children, she has good reason to pride herself on having brought them forth; and while her venerable age embraces all time, she has made use of them to embrace the whole world.

The Jews regard themselves as the fountain-head of all sanctity and the source of all religion; on the other hand, they regard us as heretics who have altered the law, or rather as rebellious Jews.

If the change had been made gradually, they think they might have been easily seduced; but, as it was made suddenly and violently, and as they can point to the day and hour of the birth of either daughter, they are scandalized at the thought that we had a beginning, and they hold firm to a religion that is older than the world.

They have never been less troubled in Europe than they are at present. Christians are fast losing that spirit of in-

tolerance which formerly animated them : they are beginning to find out that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain was a mistake, and that the persecution of Christians in France whose beliefs differed a little from those of their sovereign was another. They have discovered that fanatic zeal for the advancement of a religion is far different from the attachment which every one ought to feel towards it, and that, in order to love and practise its precepts, it is not necessary to hate and afflict those who refuse to do so.

It is much to be desired that our Mussulmans entertained the same sensible views on this subject which the Christians hold ; that peace was established once for all between Ali and Abubeker ; and that the relative merits of these holy prophets were left to the decision of God : I would have them honored by acts of veneration and respect, and not by vain preferences. We should try to be deserving of their favor, whether the place assigned them by God be on His right hand or beneath the footstool of His throne.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Saphar, 1714.

LETTER LXI.

USBEEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

I ENTERED the other day into a famous church called Notre Dame. While admiring this magnificent edifice, I had an opportunity of conversing with an ecclesiastic, whom curiosity had brought thither as well as myself. The conversation turned on the peaceful life led by those belonging to his order. "Yes," said he, "most people envy the happiness of our condition, and they are right. Still, it has its annoyances : although we are separated from the world to a certain extent, there are a thousand reasons that compel us to enter it,

and the part we have to play in it is a very difficult one indeed.

“Worldly people are rather surprising : they cannot endure either our censure or our approval ; if we try to reform them, they regard us as ridiculous ; if we praise them they consider our conduct inconsistent with our profession. There is nothing so humiliating as the fear that you may have scandalized even the ungodly. We are, then, compelled to adopt an equivocal line of action, and to exert an influence over libertines, not by the direct power inherent in our office, but by the uncertainty in which we leave them as to how we may receive their observations. To deal effectively with these neutral conditions demands a considerable amount of astuteness : men of the world, who risk everything, who give way at once to their impulses, and pursue or abandon them, according to the measure of success attainable, are much more fortunate.

“This is not all : we find it impossible to preserve in the world that happy, tranquil condition of life which is deemed so enviable. As soon as we make our appearance, we have to enter on a discussion ; we are forced, for instance, to prove the utility of prayer to one man, who does not believe in God, the necessity of fasting to another, who has during all his life denied the immortality of the soul : it is a toilsome task, and we have not the laughs on our side. Furthermore, an incessant craving for the conversion of those who differ from us torments us ; it is, in fact, the stamp of our profession. And yet it is as ridiculous a proceeding as it would be for Europeans to attempt to bleach the skin of an Ethiopian. We disturb the state and vex ourselves in our efforts to constrain people to accept points of doctrine which are not really fundamental, and resemble the Chinese conqueror who drove his subjects to rebellion by insisting that they should cut their hair and nails in a particular fashion.

“Our very zeal in pressing those for whom we are respon-

sible to fulfil the duties of their religion is often dangerous, and cannot be exercised with too much prudence. An emperor named Theodosius massacred all the inhabitants of a city, not sparing even the women and children. As he was afterwards about to enter a church, a bishop, called Ambrose, ordered the doors to be closed against him as a sacrilegious murderer. It was a heroic action. But when this emperor, having done such penance as the enormity of the crime demanded, was again admitted into the church and was about to take his seat among the priests, the same bishop ordered him to retire apart from them : this was the act of a fanatic and a madman. So true it is that excessive zeal ought to be avoided. What difference did it make to religion or the state whether this prince sat among the priests or not?"

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1714.

LETTER LXII.

ZELIS TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

As your daughter has reached her seventh year, I have judged it proper to withdraw her into the inner apartments of the seraglio, and not wait until she was ten before confiding her to the black eunuchs. Young persons cannot be deprived of the freedom of childhood too early, and given a holy education within the sacred walls where chastity dwells.

I find it impossible to agree with those mothers who refuse to confine their daughters until the period when they are about to bestow them upon a husband ; who condemn rather than consecrate them to the seraglio, and use violence to make them embrace a state which they ought to have taught

them to love. Should we expect everything from the force of reason, and nothing from the force of habit?

Vainly we are told of the subordination decreed for us by nature, if we are not made to feel as well as practise it, so that it may support us at that critical time when the passions begin to awaken and urge us to independence.

If we were only attached to you by duty, we might sometimes forget it; if inclination alone bound us, a stronger inclination might weaken the tie. But when the laws make us the property of one man, we are divided from all the others, as much apart from them as if we were separated by a hundred thousand leagues.

Nature, ever bounteous to men, has not rested content with giving them desires; it has ordained that we should have desires also, and should be the animated instruments of their felicity; it has fired us with passion that they may lead tranquil lives. When they lose their insensibility, we are at hand to restore it to them, although we may never hope to enjoy the happy state in which we are instrumental in placing them.

Still, imagine not, Usbek, that your situation is happier than mine; I have experienced a thousand pleasures you know nothing of; my imagination has wrought incessantly to make me acquainted with their value; I have lived, and you have only languished.

In the prison wherein you hold me, I am freer than you. When you guard me with increasing watchfulness, I enjoy your uneasiness; and your suspicions, your jealousy, and vexation are so many marks of your dependence.

Go on, dear Usbek: have me watched night and day; trust not to ordinary precautions; increase my happiness by the measures you take to insure yours; and learn, for all your efforts, that I dread nothing but your indifference.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2d of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1714.

LETTER LXIII.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

It looks as if you were going to spend your life in the country. At first, I lost sight of you only for a couple of days, but now a whole fortnight has gone without meeting you. I admit you are in a charming house, among the sort of people you like, and can meditate on things in general at your ease ; and, of course, that is enough to make you forget everything else in the universe.

As to myself, my life is pretty much the same as when you saw me : I go into society and try to understand it ; my mind is gradually losing all its Asiatic peculiarities, and I find no difficulty in adapting myself to European customs. I am no longer amazed when I find five or six women with five or six men in the same house, and, in fact, am beginning rather to like it.

I can truthfully affirm that I never had a real knowledge of women until I came here ; I have learned more about them in a month than I could have during thirty years in a seraglio.

Amongst us, character is uniform, because it is forced ; people are not seen as they are, but as they are compelled to be. As both mind and heart are enslaved, the voice of fear alone makes itself heard ; and fear has but one language, while nature, which expresses its feelings under so many different forms, is dumb.

Dissimulation, an art with us customary and necessary, is here unknown ; everything is said, and seen, and heard. It is as easy to read hearts as to read faces ; in manners, virtue, and even in vice, you can always detect a certain degree of artlessness.

To please women, you must prove your possession of a

kind of ability different from that by which they are pleased still more : it consists in a sort of badinage that amuses them, because it seems every moment to promise that which can be performed only at long intervals.

This badinage, naturally adapted to the dressing-room, seems to be gradually becoming the universal characteristic of the nation ; it is practised in camp and council, and even in the skirmishes of diplomacy ; professions appear ridiculous in proportion to the seriousness of the demeanor of those who follow them ; a doctor would be a less ludicrous personage, if his garments were less doleful, and if, while killing his patients, he kept them laughing.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1714.

LETTER LXIV.

THE CHIEF OF THE BLACK EUNUCHS TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

I CANNOT, magnificent lord, express to you the perplexity by which I am at present overwhelmed. The seraglio is in frightful disorder and confusion ; war reigns among your wives ; your eunuchs are divided ; on all sides resound lamentations, complaints, and reproaches ; my remonstrances are despised ; in this period of license everything seems to be permitted, and I am powerless in the seraglio.

There is not one of your wives who does not consider herself elevated above the others by birth, or beauty, or wealth, or intellect, or by her love for you ; not one who does not advance one of these motives as an argument in favor of her claim to superior distinction. I am losing every moment that long forbearance which I have always exhibited, and which, nevertheless, has only succeeded in displeasing them all ; my prudence, even my good-nature — so rare a

quality in those occupying the position I hold — have been unavailing.

Shall I disclose to you, magnificent lord, the cause of all these disorders? It has its source in your heart and in the tender affection you have for them. If you did not restrain my hand; if, instead of permitting me only to remonstrate, you allowed me to chastise; if, instead of surrendering to their lamentations and tears, you sent them to weep before me, who am never affected, — I would soon fashion them to the yoke they should bear; I would soon exhaust their imperious and independent humors.

Carried away at the age of fifteen from the depths of Africa, my native country, I was first sold to a master who had more than twenty wives or concubines. Having deemed that my grave and taciturn demeanor rendered me fit for the seraglio, he ordered me to make ready for the office I was to fill, and caused an operation to be performed on me which was at first painful, but had happy results, because it procured me the favor and confidence of my masters. I entered the seraglio; to me it was a new world. The first eunuch, the most rigid man I ever met with, governed with absolute sway. Divisions and quarrels were unheard of; a profound silence reigned everywhere; all these women went to bed and rose at the same hour throughout the entire year; they entered the bath in their turn, and left it at the slightest sign we made; during the rest of the time, they were confined to their chambers. He had a rule which compelled them to observe the greatest cleanliness; and his solicitude in this respect was extreme: the least attempt at disobedience was mercilessly punished. "I am," he used to say, "a slave; but I am the slave of your master and mine, and I but use the power which he has given me over you; it is he who chastises you, not I, who am but his instrument." These women never entered the chamber of my master except they were summoned. They welcomed the favor with joy, and

did not murmur when deprived of it. In fine, I, who held the lowest position among the blacks, in that peaceful seraglio was more respected there than I am in yours, where I command all.

As soon as this illustrious eunuch became acquainted with my genius, I found favor in his sight ; he spoke of me to his master as of one capable of carrying out his views and ultimately succeeding him in the post he filled. He did not mind my extreme youth, as he believed that my diligence would counterbalance my inexperience. But to shorten my narrative, I made such progress in his good opinion that he no longer hesitated to intrust me with the keys of those terrible places which he had so long guarded. It was under this great master that I learned the difficult art of commanding, and moulded myself in accordance with the maxims of an inflexible government. Under him I studied the heart of woman. He taught me to take advantage of her weaknesses, and not to be frightened by her haughtiness. Often he took a delight in watching me putting them through their drill, and driving them even into the very last intrenchment of obedience ; then he made them return gradually, and directed me to appear for the time compliant with their wishes. But you should see him when he found them in a state of desperation, at one time beseeching, at another, reproaching him. Their tears did not move him. "You see," he would say, complacently, "how women should be governed ; their number does not embarrass me ; I could manage all the wives of our great king with as much ease as I do those. How could a man hope to capture their hearts, if his faithful eunuchs had not begun by breaking their spirit ?"

His penetration was equal to his firmness ; he read their thoughts and their dissimulations ; from him their studied gestures and their affected airs of innocence hid nothing. He knew all their most concealed actions and all their most secret words ; this he did by persuading some to tell on

others, and he was always most liberal in remunerating the confidence reposed in him, however unimportant its nature. As they never came near their husband, except when called, the eunuch summoned such as he was pleased with, and turned the eyes of his master on those he regarded favorably. This distinction was always the reward of some secret revealed. He had persuaded his master that it was essential to discipline he should have the selection, as it would render his authority firmer. Such, magnificent lord, was the mode in which a seraglio was governed which, I firmly believe, was the best managed in Persia.

Give me free rein ; allow me to insist on obedience ; in a week order shall take the place of confusion ; this your glory requires, and your safety exacts.

Your Seraglio in Ispahan, the 9th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1714.

LETTER LXV.

USBK TO HIS WIVES

AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

I AM informed that there is great disorder in the seraglio, and that it is filled with quarrels and intestine divisions. Did I not, at my departure, recommend you to live in peace and unity? You promised to do so ; was it for the purpose of deceiving me?

It is you who are likely to be deceived, if I follow the counsels of the chief eunuch, and employ my authority in compelling you to adopt a mode of life which, it seems, my exhortations could not persuade you to follow.

I do not wish to resort to violent methods until all else has failed. Do, therefore, for your own sakes what you will not do for mine.

The first eunuch has good reason for his complaints ; he says you do not respect him. How can you reconcile such conduct with the modesty becoming your condition ? Is it not to him that your virtue has been entrusted during my absence ? He is the depository of that sacred treasure. But the contempt with which you treat him is a proof that those whose duty it is to see that you live according to the laws of honor are a source of annoyance to you.

Change your conduct, I beseech you. Act in such a way that, when proposals which compromise your freedom and tranquillity are again laid before me, I may be able to reject them.

For I should wish to make you forget that I am your master, so that you might only remember that I am your spouse.)

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXVI.

RICA TO —

ALTHOUGH people are very much devoted to science in these quarters, I am rather inclined to doubt as to the extent of their learning. The man who is sceptical about everything as a philosopher does not venture to deny anything as a theologian ; such a contradictory personage is quite satisfied with himself, if you grant him the privilege of making certain distinctions. The passion of most Frenchmen is to be thought wits ; and the passion of those who wish to be thought wits is to write books.

It is impossible to imagine a more unfortunate mania : nature has wisely provided that the follies of men should be ephemeral ; but, unhappily, these very follies are immor-

talized in books. A fool ought to have been satisfied with boring all those who have lived with him; yet he insists on torturing future races; he is determined that his folly shall triumph over the oblivion in which he ought to have been able to find as much enjoyment as he does in his last slumber; he wishes posterity to know that he has lived, and remember forever that he was a fool.

There is no class of authors I despise more than I do compilers, who come from every side to search for the fragments of other men's works, which they wedge into their own, just as you would introduce patches of turf into the border of a flower-plot. They are not superior to printers who arrange characters in such a way as to produce a book, but whose manual labor has been all that has entered into its composition. I would have original books respected. It is a kind of profanation to tear from them the parts of which they are composed, as if from a sanctuary, and thereby expose them to a contempt they do not deserve.

When a man has nothing novel to say, why is he not silent? Who cares for having the same thing said over again? I will, however, give you a fresh illustration. You are a clever man; and, to prove it, you come into my library and place the books that were on the upper shelves on the lower ones, and *vice versa*: you have produced a masterpiece!

I write to you, ———, because a book I have just laid down has fairly enraged me. It is so bulky that you would think it contained all the sciences; but it has simply split my head without introducing anything through the crack. Adieu.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXVII.

IBBEN TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

THREE vessels have arrived here without bringing any news of you. Are you sick? or does it give you pleasure to make me anxious?

If you do not care for me in a country where you have no connections, how will it be when you are in Persia and in the bosom of your family? But perhaps I am mistaken; your disposition is so amiable that it attracts friends wherever you go; the heart is the citizen of all countries, and with such a nature as yours, you cannot help forming ties wherever you are. I like old friends myself; but still I have no objection to make new ones.

In whatever country I have lived, I have acted as if I intended spending my whole life there. I have felt the same attachment for the virtuous, the same pity, or rather the same affection, for the unfortunate, and the same esteem for all whom prosperity had not blinded. Such is my character, Usbek; wherever I find true men I find true friends.

There is a Guebre here who, next to you, holds, I believe, the first place in my heart. He is the very soul of honesty. Private reasons have forced him to retire into this city, where he lives quietly with a wife whom he loves, on the earnings of an honorable traffic. The whole course of his life has been marked by generous deeds, and, although he prefers obscurity, there is more heroism in his heart than in that of the greatest monarchs.

I have spoken about you to him a thousand times, and have shown him your letters. I have remarked that this gives him pleasure, and I see that you have already a friend whom you do not know.

Here you will find an account of his chief adventures : although he was very much disinclined to write them, he could not refuse anything to my friendship, and I confide them to yours.

THE HISTORY OF APHERIDON AND ASTARTE.

I was born among the Guebres, whose religion is, perhaps, the oldest in the world. Unfortunately for me, love came to me before reason did. When I was hardly six, I could not live apart from my sister. My eyes were always riveted on her, and, if she left me for a moment, she found me bathed in tears on her return. Every day that added to my age added also to my love. My father, astonished at the intensity of my emotion, was willing to let us marry according to the ancient usage introduced among the Guebres by Cambyzes ; but the fear of the Mahometans, under whose yoke we live, prevents our people from thinking of those sacred unions enjoined as well as permitted by our religion, being, as they are, the artless images of the unions already formed by Nature.

My father, seeing it would be dangerous to yield to my inclinations, which were also his, determined to extinguish a flame which he believed had only just sprung into existence, but which was in reality at its height. Under the pretext that he was obliged to travel he took me with him, leaving my sister in the care of a female relative, for my mother had been dead two years. I will not describe my despair at this separation. I embraced my sister, who was bathed in tears ; but I shed none myself, for grief had rendered me insensible. We arrived in Teflis ; and my father, after entrusting my education to one of his relatives, left me and returned home.

Some time afterwards, I learned that he had, through the influence of one of his friends, obtained a position for my sister in the harem of the king as an attendant on one of the

sultanas. If I had been told of her death, I should not have been more dismayed ; for, apart from the fact that I could not meet her, her entrance into the harem implied her conversion to Mahometanism, and, according to the prejudices of her religion, she must now look upon me with horror. However, as I could no longer endure existence at Teflis, and was tired of myself and tired of life, I returned to Ispahan. My first words to my father were bitter. I upbraided him for placing his daughter in a post she could only fill by changing her religion. "You have drawn down on your family," I said, "the wrath of God and of the Sun which enlightens you ; you have done worse than if you had polluted the Elements, since you have polluted the soul of your daughter, which is not less pure than they. As for me, I shall die of sorrow and of love ; may my death be the only penalty you have to suffer at the hands of God !" Thereupon, I left him, and for two years spent my time in gazing on the walls of the harem, and trying to find out in what part of it my sister lived, risking death a thousand times every day in case I encountered any of the eunuchs who prowl around these terrible places.

At length my father died, and the sultana my sister served, becoming jealous of her beauty, married her to a eunuch who was passionately attached to her. My sister therefore left the seraglio, and with her eunuch took a house in Ispahan. I was three years without exchanging a word with her ; for the barbarous eunuch was the most jealous of men, and always put me off with various excuses. When at last I was admitted to his harem, I had to speak to my sister through a lattice, and she was so muffled up in veils and coverings that it would take the eyes of a lynx to recognize her ; I only knew her by the sound of her voice. What was my emotion to see her so near and yet so far ! I repressed it, however, for keen eyes were watching me. As to her, as far as I could observe, she shed a few tears. Her husband made some

sort of lame apology ; but I spurned him as the vilest of slaves. He was troubled at hearing me address my sister in a tongue that was unknown to him ; it was the ancient Persian, our sacred language. "What !" I said, "is it true, sister, that you have abandoned the religion of your fathers ? I know that, on your entrance into the harem, you must have professed Mahometanism ; but tell me, was it with your heart as well as with your lips that you deserted a religion which permits me to love you ? And for whom have you left this religion which ought to be so dear to you ?— for a wretch who still bears the marks of the chains he has worn ; for a creature who, if he were a man, would be the vilest of his kind." — "Brother," she answered, "this man is, after all, my husband. I must honor him, unworthy as you deem him ; and I also should be the vilest of women, if—" "Ah ! sister," I interrupted, "he is not and can never be your husband ; if you are as faithful as your ancestors, you must regard him as a monster." — "Alas !" she returned, "how far away does that religion of yours seem to be from me ! I had hardly learned its precepts when I was compelled to forget them. You see that even the language in which you speak to me is no longer familiar, and I have the greatest difficulty in expressing my thoughts in it ; but for all that, the memories of our childhood are still a delight to me ; the pleasures I have since enjoyed have had no reality ; never has a day passed that I did not think of you ; and you have had more to do with my marriage than you suppose ; for I contracted it in the hope of seeing you again. But what distress will not this day, which has already been a source of trouble, bring upon me ! You have evidently lost your self-control, and my husband is beside himself with rage and jealousy : I can never see you again, and am doubtless now speaking to you for the last time in my life. If such is the case, brother, my life will not be long." After these words she became so agitated that she could not continue the conversa-

tion, and retired, leaving me the most miserable of human kind.

Three or four days after, I asked to see my sister; the barbarous eunuch tried to prevent me; but, apart from the fact that these kinds of husbands have not the same authority over their wives that others have, he was so distractedly in love with my sister that he could refuse her nothing. I saw her again in the same place and muffled up as before. She was accompanied by two slaves, and so we had recourse to the old Persian language again. "Sister," I said, "how comes it that I cannot see you except in such hideous surroundings?—those walls that shut you out from the world, those bolts and bars, and, above all, those vile wretches who guard you, render me furious. How could you ever have thought of giving up the sweet freedom in which your ancestors rejoiced? The only guardian of your chaste mother's virtue was that virtue itself. She and her husband lived together in trustful affection, and the simplicity of their manners made them a thousand times richer than could all the false splendor you seem to enjoy in this sumptuous mansion. When you lost your religion, you lost your liberty, your happiness, and that precious equality which constitutes the honor of your sex. But, what is worse still, you are not the wife, but the slave of a slave who has been degraded below humanity."—"Ah! brother," she exclaimed, "respect my husband; respect the religion I have embraced; according to that religion I can neither listen nor speak to you without crime."—"What! sister," I cried, in a transport of indignation, "do you really believe that that religion is true?"—"Ah!" she returned, "how much more to my advantage it would be, if it were not true! I have made too many sacrifices for its sake not to believe it, and if my doubts—" She paused at these words. "Yes, sister, your doubts are well founded, whatever be their nature. What can you hope from a religion that makes you wretched in

this world and excludes you from paradise in the next? Remember that our religion is the oldest in the world ; that it has always flourished in Persia ; that its origin, like that of the Persian empire, is lost in the night of ages ; that it was only chance which gave birth to Mahometanism, and that the sect owes its success to persecution and conquest, not to persuasion. If our ancient princes had not been weak, the worship of the magi would still reign triumphant. Transport yourself to those remote ages ; everything connected with them speaks to you of magism, nothing of the Mahometan sect, which was not even in its infancy, for thousands of years afterwards." — " But," she replied, " if my religion is more modern than yours, it is also more pure ; we adore one only God, while you worship the Sun, the Stars, the Fire, and even the Elements." — " I see, sister, you have learned among the Mussulmans to calumniate our holy religion. We adore neither the Stars nor the Elements, nor have our forefathers ever adored them either ; never have they raised temples to them or offered sacrifices. They have simply rendered an inferior kind of worship to them as being the manifestations and works of Divine Power. But, sister, in the name of God who is our light, accept this sacred book which I have brought to you ; it is the book of our lawgiver Zoroaster. Read it without prejudice, and receive into your heart the rays of light which must illumine you when you do read it. Call to mind those ancestors of yours who for so long a time honored the Sun in the holy city of Balk ; and above all think of me, whose repose and fortune, nay, whose very life, depend on your conversion."

I returned two days after ; I did not speak to her ; I awaited in silence the sentence of life or death. " You are loved, my brother," she said, " and by a Guebre. I struggled long ; but, O ye Gods, what obstacles will not love remove ! How relieved I feel ! I no longer fear to love you to excess, I can place no limit to my love now ; its very

excess is lawful. Ah ! how thoroughly such a thought suits the state of my heart ! But you, who have broken the chains which my own mind had forged, when do you intend to break those which shackle my hands ? From this moment I am yours ; show by the promptitude of your acceptance how dear is the present I bestow upon you. Brother, I think I shall die in your arms the first time I shall embrace you." I can never express the joy I felt on hearing these sweet words. I believed myself and actually saw myself in one moment the happiest of men. I saw all the desires I had been forming during twenty-five years of my life nearly fulfilled, and all the sorrows that had rendered that life so wretched vanish away. But when I had grown accustomed to these sweet thoughts, I perceived I was not so near my happiness as I had fancied, although I had surmounted the greatest obstacle of all. It would be necessary to elude the vigilance of my sister's guardians. I did not dare to confide my secret to any one ; it was necessary that we two should do everything. If I failed, I incurred the risk of being impaled ; but, in my eyes, no penalty could be as cruel as failure. We agreed that she should send to me for a clock, bequeathed to her by her father, and that I should place a file in it for sawing the lattice of the window, which opened on the street, as well as a knotted rope whereby to descend. Then I was to abandon my visits, but to station myself every night under her window until she could execute her design. I passed fifteen nights without seeing any one, because she had not found a favorable opportunity. At length, on the sixteenth night, I heard the rasping of the file ; now and then the work was interrupted, and on such occasions I was seized with unspeakable dread. At last, after an hour's labor, I saw her fasten the rope. She let herself down and glided into my arms. All feeling of danger vanished, and I remained for a long time without stirring from the spot. Then, I conducted her out of the city to a

place where I had a horse ready. I placed her behind me, and galloped as fast as I could from a neighborhood which might become so fatal to us. We arrived before daylight at the dwelling of a Guebre in a lonely spot to which he had retired, living frugally by the labor of his hands. We did not judge it prudent to remain there, and, by his advice, we entered a dense forest, where we lived in the hollow of an old oak, waiting for the rumor of our flight to die away. We stayed in this singular habitation, never meeting any one and constantly repeating to each other the tale of our undying love. We were always on the watch for an opportunity to visit some Guebre priest, in order that he might perform the marriage ceremony prescribed by our sacred books. "Sister," I said to her, "how holy is this union! Nature has already united us, but soon our holy law will unite us by a closer tie." At last a priest came to quiet our amorous impatience. He performed all the ceremonies of marriage in the house of the peasant, and wished us a thousand times all the vigor of Gustaspes and all the sanctity of Hoharaspes. Soon after this, we left Persia, where we were not safe, and retired to Georgia. There we remained for a year, becoming more charmed with each other every day. But, as my money was giving out and I dreaded misery for my sister, not for myself, I left her to seek help from my relations. Never was farewell more tender than ours. My journey, however, was not only useless but fatal; for, having found on the one hand, that all my property was confiscated, and, on the other, that it was out of the power of my relatives to afford me much relief, I could obtain only just enough money to enable me to return. But what was my despair! My sister was lost to me. A few days before my arrival, the Tartars had attacked the town in which she dwelt; and, as they saw she was beautiful, they seized her and sold her to some Jews who were going to Turkey, leaving me only a little daughter she had given birth to a few





THE END OF THE WORLD

1871

months before. I followed the Jews, and came up with them three leagues further on : my prayers and tears were in vain ; they asked me for thirty tomans as the ransom of my sister, and refused to make the slightest reduction. After appealing to all I met, after imploring the aid of the Turkish and Jewish priests without success, I went to an Armenian merchant, and sold myself and my daughter to him for thirty-five tomans. Then I sought the Jews and gave them thirty tomans, reserving five for my sister, whom I had not yet seen. "You are free, sister," I said to her, "and I can embrace you ; here are five tomans I bring you ; I am sorry they did not pay a higher price for me."—"What !" she exclaimed, "you have sold yourself !"—"Yes," I answered. — "Ah ! unhappy man, what have you done ? Was I not sufficiently unfortunate to prevent you from adding to my misery ? Your freedom was to me a consolation ; your slavery will be my death. How cruel is your love, my brother !—And my daughter ? I do not see her."—"She is sold also," I replied. We both fell weeping, too weak to utter another word. At length, I went to see my master, and my sister was with him almost as soon as I. She threw herself at his feet. "Others might ask you for liberty," she cried, "I ask you for slavery : take me ; you can sell me for a higher price than my husband." Then took place a struggle that forced tears from the eyes of my master. "Unhappy man !" she said, "did you imagine I should accept my freedom at the price of yours ? Master, you behold two unfortunates who will die if you separate them. I give myself up to you ; pay me ; perhaps this money and my services may some day obtain from you that which I do not now venture to ask. It is your interest not to separate us ; consider that his life depends on mine." The Armenian was a merciful man, and was affected by our misfortunes. "Let both of you serve me with zeal and fidelity, and I promise you your liberty in a year ; I see that

neither of you deserve the fate which has been your portion. If, when you are free, fortune smiles upon you, and your success is equal to your merit, I am certain you will compensate me for the loss I shall suffer." We both embraced his knees, and followed him on his journey. We comforted each other in the servile tasks assigned us, and I was always delighted when I had a chance to perform the work allotted to my sister.

The year came to an end at last ; my master was true to his word, and liberated both of us. We returned to Teflis ; there I discovered an old friend of my father, a physician in successful practice in the town ; he lent me money enough to engage in commerce. Some business brought me afterwards to Smyrna, where I established myself. I have been living here now six years, and have enjoyed the companionship of the most amiable and delightful people in the world. Union reigns in my family, and I would not change my condition for that of the greatest king that ever lived. I was fortunate enough to find the Armenian merchant to whom I owe everything, and have been able to render him certain weighty services.

SMYRNA, the 27th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1714.

LETTER LXVIII.

RICA TO USBEK

At ———

I DINED the other day at the house of a magistrate, who had invited me several times. After much desultory conversation, I said : "Monsieur, your profession appears to me to be a very laborious one." — "Oh, not at all to the extent you imagine," he answered ; "in fact, considering the way we practise it, it is more of an amusement than anything else." —

"How can that be? Is not your head always full of other people's business? Are you not always occupied with matters that have no personal interest for you?"—"You are right; these affairs do not interest us, for the very good reason that we do not take any interest in them; and that is why our profession is by no means so wearisome as you imagined." When I saw that he looked at the matter from such a free-and-easy point of view, I continued: "Monsieur, I have not seen your study."—"I believe you, for I have none. When I took this office, I needed money to pay the expense of my installation. I sold my library, and the bookseller who bought it left me only my account-book out of all the vast number of volumes it contained. I do not regret them; we judges are not puffed up with vain knowledge. What is the good of all these law books? Almost all cases depend for their solution on some question of fact, and are outside the general rule."—"But, monsieur, may not this be because you have placed them outside the general rule? Why should every nation in the world have laws, if these laws are not to be applied; and how can they be applied by those who are ignorant of them?"—"If you were acquainted with our law-courts, you would not speak as you do," retorted the magistrate. "We have living books, namely, the advocates, who work in our behalf, and undertake the task of instructing us."—"And do they not sometimes also undertake the task of deceiving you?" I rejoined. "You would be acting wisely, if you were on your guard against their stratagems; they are well equipped for an armed attack on your justice; it were well that you were equally so for your defence, and that you did not rush into the conflict, lightly clad, to encounter men who are armed to the teeth."

Paria, the 13th of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXIX.

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

You would never have imagined that I could have become a greater metaphysician than I was already ; yet such is the case ; and you will be convinced of the fact when you have waded through the torrent of philosophy I am about to let loose upon you.

The wisest philosophers who have reflected upon the nature of God have said that He is a supremely perfect being ; but they have abused this idea excessively ; they have made a catalogue of all the perfections man is capable of possessing or imagining, and have transferred them to the Deity, never considering that those attributes are often contradictory, and cannot exist in the same subject without destroying one another. The western poets say that a painter, who wished to draw a picture of the goddess of beauty, assembled the fairest Greek women, and, taking from each her characteristic charm, combined all the fascinating graces before him into a representation of the most enchanting of all the goddesses. If a man had, on that account, concluded that she was blond and brown, black-eyed and blue-eyed, haughty and gentle, he would pass for a fool.

God must often lack a perfection that would imply a great imperfection ; but He is never limited except by Himself ; He is His own law ; thus, although God is omnipotent, He cannot violate His own promises nor deceive men ; often too His impotence is not subjective, but the property of relative things ; and this is why He cannot alter essentials.

There is, therefore, no reason for surprise in the fact that some of our doctors have ventured on a denial of the infinite

foreknowledge of God, on the ground that it is incompatible with His justice.

The idea may seem audacious, yet metaphysics lends it a marvellously strong appearance of truth. According to its principles, it is not possible for God to foresee those things that depend on the determination of free causes, because that which has not happened is not, and cannot, consequently, be the object of cognition ; for nothing, as it has no properties, cannot be perceived ; God cannot read a will which is not, and see in a soul that which has no existence in it ; for, until the mind has determined, the determining act is not in it.

The soul is the agent of its own determination ; but there are occasions when it is so indeterminate, that it knows not on which side to determine. Often its determinism is only the result of a wish to make use of its liberty ; and it does so in such a way that God can have no foreknowledge of the subjective or objective action of its determinism.

How could God foresee the things which depend on the determination of free causes ? He could foresee them only in two ways : by conjecture, which is contradictory of His infinite foreknowledge ; or as necessary effects that infallibly follow from a producing cause equally infallible, which is still more contradictory, for it supposes that the soul is free, while in reality it is not freer than a billiard-ball, which is free to move when struck by another ball.

Still, you must not imagine that I am trying to limit the knowledge of God. As He controls the acts of His creatures according to His pleasure, He knows all that He wishes to know. But, although He can see everything, He does not always make use of His power ; He ordinarily leaves to the creature the power to act or not to act, in order that man may freely choose between right and wrong ; and this is the reason why God renounces the right to act on the human soul and determine it. But, when He wishes to have

foreknowledge of anything, He always has it; because He has only to will that it happen as He sees it and determine His creatures in conformity with His will. It is thus that He selects what is to happen out of the number of purely possible things, fixing by His decrees the future determinations of men's minds, and depriving them of the power He has given them of acting or not acting.

I will venture on a comparison as to a subject which is far above all comparisons. A monarch is ignorant what his ambassador will do in a certain important affair; if, however, he wishes to know what his course is sure to be, he has only to order him to act in such or such a manner, and he may be quite certain the affair will turn out as he planned it.

The Koran and the Jewish books testify everywhere against the dogma of absolute foreknowledge; these works depict God as being ignorant of the future determination of men's minds; and it would seem as if this were the first truth which Moses has taught mankind.

God places Adam in the terrestrial paradise, on condition that he shall not eat of a certain fruit; an absurd command, if the being who gave it was acquainted with the future determinations of men's minds. Could such a being attach conditions to His favors, without rendering these favors a mockery? It is as if a man who knew perfectly well that Bagdad had been captured, were to say to another man: "I will give you a thousand crowns, if Bagdad is not captured." Would not such an offer be looked upon as a poor jest?

But why all this philosophy, my dear Rhedi? God is so high above us that we cannot see even the clouds that enshroud Him. We know Him only through the commandments He has given us. He is a spirit, immense and infinite. May His greatness inspire us with a sense of our own littleness. To humble ourselves continually is to adore him continually.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXX.

ZELIS TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

SOLIMAN, whom you love, is in despair on account of an affront he has just received. A harebrained young fellow, named Suphis, asked his daughter in marriage some three months ago. The report and description given of the girl by the women who had known her since childhood seemed to be perfectly satisfactory to him ; the dowry was arranged, and everything appeared to be passing off pleasantly. Yesterday, the girl left her home on horseback, attended by her eunuch and veiled, according to custom, from head to foot. But as soon as she reached the house of her intended husband, he shut the door in her face, and swore he would not receive her except her dowry was increased. The relatives of both parties met to bring about a settlement of some sort ; and Soliman, after a good deal of reluctance, was persuaded to make a small present to his son-in-law. At length, the marriage ceremonies were completed, and the young girl was conducted to the bed of her husband with sufficient violence ; but, an hour afterwards, this young madman rose up in a rage, cut her face in several places, swore that she was not a virgin, and sent her back to her father, who is in a state of frenzy on account of the insult. Many persons insist that the girl is innocent. Fathers are very unfortunate in being exposed to such affronts. If such a thing were to happen to my daughter, I believe I should die of grief.

The Seraglio of Fatme, the 9th of the moon of Gemmadi 7, 1714.

LETTER LXXI.

USBEK TO ZELIS.

I pity Soliman, especially as he has no remedy for the outrage he has suffered : his son-in-law has simply availed himself of the freedom allowed him by the law. It is, in my opinion, a very harsh law, which places the honor of a family at the mercy of the caprices of a madman. It is all very well for people to say that the truth in this matter can be known from certain symptoms ; this is an old error to which sensible people no longer give any credit, and our physicians adduce invincible reasons for the uncertainty of these proofs. Even the Christians regard them as chimerical, although they are clearly established by their sacred books, and although their ancient lawgiver makes the innocence or guilt of all girls depend on these signs.

I am well pleased to learn that you are paying the greatest attention to the education of your daughter. May God grant that her husband find her as beautiful and as pure as Fatima ; may she have ten eunuchs to guard her ; may she be the ornament and honor of the seraglio for which she is destined ; may she have overhead only gilded ceilings, and walk only on the richest carpets ; and, to crown those wishes, may my eyes see her in all her glory !

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Chalval, 1714.

LETTER LXXII.

RICA TO USBEK

At —.

THE other day I happened to be present in a company where I came across a man who had certainly a high opinion of himself. In a quarter of an hour, he decided three questions in ethics, four problems in history, and five points in natural philosophy. Such a universal dogmatist I have never encountered before. His mind was not for one moment disturbed by the slightest doubt. We left the sciences, and spoke of the news of the day: he decided upon the news of the day. I resolved to make an effort to catch him, and I said to myself: "If I succeed, it will only be by starting a subject in which I fancy I am pretty well up; I'll tackle him on my native land." So I spoke to him about Persia; but I had hardly said four words when he contradicted me twice, on the ground that Messieurs Tavernier and Chardin did not bear out the truth of my statements. "Great heavens!" I thought, "what a man! He will soon know the streets of Ispahan better than I do!" I was not long in concluding my wisest course was to be silent and let him talk on. He is still dogmatizing.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Zilcade, 1715.



LETTER LXXIII.

RICA TO —

I HAVE heard a good deal of talk about a sort of tribunal called the French Academy. There is none in the world less respected; for it is said that no sooner has it issued one of its decrees than the people set about breaking it and establishing laws of their own which the Academy has to observe.

Some time ago, in order to strengthen its authority, it issued a code of decisions. This child of so many parents was almost old at its birth, and, although legitimate, a bastard, who came into the world some time before, had almost strangled it when it appeared.

To chatter incessantly would seem to be the only function of those who compose it. Eulogy is the exclusive subject of their eternal babble; and, as soon as they are initiated into its mysteries, an uncontrollable desire of panegyrising everybody takes possession of them and never leaves them.

This body has forty heads, all stuffed with figures, metaphors, and antitheses: as a consequence every utterance of their mouths is an exclamation, and their ears are attuned only to cadence and harmony. As for their eyes, we need not speak of them: it would seem as if the Academy was intended to speak and not to see. It is not firm on its legs, for time is its scourge, gives it a shaking every moment, and destroys all it has done. It was formerly said that its hands were grasping; I do not care to say anything on that subject, and will let those decide the question who knows more about it than I.

I have wished, —, to give you a notion of certain oddities unknown in our Persia. Our minds have no par-

~~ticular bias towards what is singular and extravagant. We always fashion our simple customs and artless manners in accordance with the dictates of nature.~~

PARIS, the 27th of the moon of Zilhage, 1715.

LETTER LXXIV.

RICA TO USBEK

AT —.

A FEW days ago, a man of my acquaintance said to me: "I promised to introduce you to some of the really good houses of Paris; I will conduct you now to that of a great lord who is one of the best representatives of social excellence we have in the kingdom."

"What do you mean by that, monsieur? Is he more polite and affable than others?"—"Oh, no, such is not the case," he answered.—"Ah! I see: he shows his superiority, on every occasion, over those who approach him. If that is so, I beg to be excused; I accept my inferiority, and leave him to his sense of superiority."

I had to go, however, and I saw a little man with so lofty an air, who took a pinch of snuff so arrogantly and blew his nose with such severity and spat so phlegmatically and caressed his dogs with such a show of considering them far more elevated in the scale of animals than the men present, that I could not keep my astonishment within bounds. "Great heavens!" said I to myself, "if I ever posed as such a representative of our upper class in Persia, I must have posed as a great fool!" Surely, Usbek, we would have shown ourselves both petty-minded and ill-natured, if we offered a hundred little insults to those persons who used to visit us every day in order to prove their good will in our regard. They knew well we were

above them; and if they had happened to be ignorant of the fact, the favors we were constantly conferring on them would have brought the knowledge of it home to them. We felt we were too high-placed to render it necessary for us to do anything to gain respect; so we did everything to gain affection: we were always at home to the humblest; they always found us accessible to pity, though living amid splendors that generally harden the feelings; they saw that our hearts alone belonged to a sphere above them; we descended to their wants. But when it became necessary to uphold the majesty of our prince in public ceremonies, or to arouse respect for our country in the bosom of foreigners, or, in fine, to animate our soldiers in times of danger, we rose a hundred times higher than we had before descended; we resumed our lofty demeanor, and were thought to be sufficiently distinguished representatives of our rank.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXV.

USBЕК TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

I MUST confess that I have not remarked among Christians that lively faith in their religion which is found among Mussulmans; among them it is a long road between profession and belief, between belief and conviction, between conviction and practice. Religion is not so much a subject of sanctification as of debate in which everybody feels at liberty to join. Courtiers, warriors, even women, rise in revolt against the ecclesiastics and demand that proofs be presented to them of what they are all the time firmly resolved not to believe. Nor do these people act thus

because reason has determined their course and they have taken the pains to examine the truth or falseness of the religion they reject: no, they are rebels who have felt the yoke, and have shaken it off before knowing its real nature. Consequently, they are no firmer in their incredulity than they were in their faith; they live in a tide whose ebb and flow bears them back now to the one and now to the other. A person belonging to this class said to me some time ago: "I believe in the immortality of the soul for six months of the year; my opinions depend absolutely on my bodily constitution. According to the condition of my animal spirits, the goodness or badness of my digestion, the fineness or roughness of the air I breathe, the lightness or solidity of the food I eat, I am a follower of Spinoza, a Socinian, a Catholic, a devout or an impious man. When the doctor is at my bedside, then comes the confessor's opportunity. But I see to it that religion does not interfere with my comfort when I am in good health; I have no objection to receiving its consolations when I am sick. When I have no longer anything to expect in this world, religion comes forward and wins me by her promises; I am delighted to surrender to her, and die with hope on my side."

A long time ago, Christian princes freed all the slaves in their dominions, because, said they, Christianity makes all men equal. It is true that this act of religion was very useful to them, because they lessened the power of the great lords by taking the common people away from their control. Afterwards, they made conquests in countries where they saw it would be to their advantage to have slaves; they permitted them to be bought and sold, forgetting the religious principle that at one time affected them so deeply. But what can be really said on the subject? You have truth at one time, error at another. Why do we not act like the Christians? It has been very childish of us to reject settle-

ments and easy conquests in pleasant climes, because we could not find water pure enough for our ablutions, according to the principles of our holy Koran !¹

I thank God the all-powerful, who has sent us His great prophet Ali ; for this cause do I profess a religion which renders all human interests secondary to itself, and which is as pure as the sky from which it has descended.

PARIS, the 13th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXVI.

USBK TO HIS FRIEND IBSEN

AT SMYRNA.

THE laws are furious in Europe against those who commit suicide ; these people suffer, as it were, a second death, are dragged ignominiously through the streets, are proclaimed infamous, and, in addition to all this, their goods are confiscated.

These laws seem to me, Ibsen, to be very unjust. When I am overwhelmed with sorrow, misery, and contempt, why should I be debarred from ending my troubles and cruelly deprived of a remedy that is in my hands ?

Why should I be compelled to labor for a society to which I no longer consent to belong, or held to a compact to which I never was a party ? Society is founded on mutual advantage ; but, when it becomes a burden, what prevents me from renouncing it ? Life was bestowed upon me as a favor ; I may then give it back when it is a favor no longer ; the cause ceasing, the effect ought to cease also.

Will the prince insist on me being his subject when I do not derive any advantages from my subjection ? Can my

¹ The Mahometans did not care to conquer Venice for the reason assigned.

fellow-citizens be so unjust as to demand that I share a lot that implies utility for them, but for me despair? Does God, unlike other benefactors, wish to condemn me to receive favors that crush me to the earth?

I am obliged to obey the laws when I live under the laws; but can laws under which I no longer live continue to bind me?

"But," it will be said, "you disturb the order of Providence. God has united your soul with your body; by separating what God has joined, you oppose His designs and resist Him."

What does this mean? Do I disturb the order of Providence when I change the modifications of matter, and render a ball square which the first laws of motion, that is to say, the laws of creation and conservation, had made round? No, undoubtedly; I but use the right which has been given me; and in this sense, I can disturb the whole order of nature, if I fancy doing so, without any one being able to say that I oppose Providence.

Will there be less order and less arrangement in the universe when my soul is separated from my body? Do you believe that new combinations will be less perfect and less dependent upon general laws; that the world will lose anything thereby, and that the works of God will be less great, or rather, less immense?

Do you believe that my body, when it has become an ear of wheat, a worm, or a piece of turf, will be changed into a work of nature less worthy of her; and that my soul, when it has been liberated from its earthly companion, will be less sublime?

All these ideas, my dear Ibben, have no other source than our pride; we do not feel our littleness, and, however small we may be, we wish to reckon for something in the universe, to be distinguished and to be of great importance therein.

We fancy that the annihilation of so perfect a being as man

would degrade all nature ; and we cannot conceive that a man more or less in the world, what do I say? nay, all mankind, a hundred million heads like ours, are but a fragile, insignificant atom which God perceives only because of the immensity of his knowledge.

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXVII.

IBBEN TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

It seems to me, my dear Usbek, that in the eyes of a true Mussulman, misfortunes are less chastisements than warnings. Very precious are those days in which we are induced to atone for our offences. It is our seasons of prosperity that ought to be abridged. What avails all our impatience except to show that we would wish to be happy independently of Him who gives happiness, because He is happiness itself?

If a being is composed of two beings, and the necessity of preserving their union is a distinctive mark of submission to the orders of the Creator, naturally this necessity has been emphasized by a religious law ; and, as this necessity is the best guarantee to men of their responsibility, it has been emphasized by a civil law.

SMYRNA, the last day of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXVIII.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

I SEND you a copy of a letter sent here by a Frenchman who is travelling in Spain ; I have no doubt you will be glad to see it : —

“ I have been now six months going through Spain and Portugal, and have been living amongst a people who despise all nations except the French ; they do the latter the honor of hating them.

“ Gravity is the shining characteristic of these two kingdoms ; it has two methods of manifesting itself : by spectacles and by mustaches.

“ Spectacles prove, by the demonstrative method, that the wearer of them is a man splendidly equipped as a scientist, and so profoundly devoted to the reading of the most abstruse literature that his sight has thereby been weakened, and every nose adorned or burdened therewith must pass for the nose of a scholar.

“ As for the mustache, it is highly respectable in itself, without regard to the results it may produce ; but, in addition, it has been the occasion of great advantage to the service of the monarch and the honor of the nation, as was well shown in the case of a famous Portuguese general in the Indies.¹ Finding himself in need of money, he cut off one of his mustaches and demanded that the inhabitants of Goa should lend him twenty thousand pistoles on this pledge ; they were lent without hesitation, and he afterwards honorably redeemed his mustache.

“ It is easily conceivable that such grave and phlegmatic

¹ John de Castro.

people as these are, are not likely to be without vanity ; and this surmise would be correct.

" Their vanity is ordinarily based on two very important considerations. Such of the natives of the Peninsula as receive the appellation of ' Old Christians,' are wonderfully elated by this circumstance ; for it is thereby proved that they are not descendants of those whom the Inquisition has, for some centuries, been persuading to embrace the Christian religion. On the other hand, those living in the Indies are not less flattered by the consideration that they have the sublime merit of being, as they say, ' white-fleshed ' men. Never was sultana in the seraglio of the Great Sultan prouder of her beauty than is the oldest and ugliest lout amongst them of the olive-tinted paleness of his complexion, as he sits in some Mexican town, with folded arms, at his door. Of course, a man of such consequence, a creature so perfect, would not work for all the treasures of the world, and would not, by some vile, mechanical trade, compromise the honor and dignity of his skin.

" It would be well, also, to know that when a man has a certain additional merit in Spain, such, for instance, as that of being the proprietor of a long sword, or that of making a discordant guitar shriek — an art inherited from his father — he is sure to work nevermore ; his honor is interested in the repose of his limbs. He who remains seated ten hours a day obtains double the consideration of him who remains only five ; because nobility is acquired by sitting on chairs.

" But, although these invincible enemies of toil make a parade of their philosophic tranquillity, their hearts give them the lie ; for they are always in love. No men in the world can equal them in the art of languishing in a dying state beneath the balconies of their mistresses ; and no Spaniard who has not a cold in his head can ever pass for a gallant.

" They are, firstly, devotees, and secondly, jealous. They

take good care that their wives shall not be exposed to any danger coming from a soldier riddled with wounds, or a lawyer in the last stage of decrepitude ; but they will leave them alone with some fervent young novice, who lowers his eyes, or with a robust Franciscan, who is not afraid to raise them. They are better acquainted than other people with the weakness of women ; they will not have any one view their heels or surprise their toes ; they know that imagination travels fast and does not wait for amusement on the road ; it wants to arrive at the end of the journey.

"It is said that the rigor of love is cruel everywhere ; but it is more cruel in Spain than in any other country. If the women cure the pains of their adorers, it is by making them suffer pains of a different kind ; and an extinct passion is always a long and disagreeable memory for the latter.

"They have little forms of politeness, which, in France, would seem entirely out of place ; for instance, a captain never beats one of his soldiers without asking the soldier's permission to do so, and the Inquisition makes the most profound apologies to the Jew it is about to roast.

"The Spaniards who are not liable to be burned show such a love for the Inquisition, that it would really exhibit bad taste in any one who wished to deprive them of it. For my part, I should like to see another established, not against heretics, but against those heresiarchs who attribute to trivial little monastic practices the same efficaciousness they do to the Seven Sacraments, who adore what they ought only to venerate, and who are so devout that they are hardly Christians.

"You will find wit and good sense among the Spaniards ; but do not search for these qualities in their books : look at one of their libraries, with the romances on one side, and the works of the schoolmen on the other ; you would say the whole collection was brought together by some secret enemy of human reason.

"The only one of their books which is really good is that which shows the absurdity of all the others.

"They have made immense discoveries in the New World ; and they are still ignorant of parts of their own peninsula.

"They say the sun rises and sets in some part of their dominions at the same time ; but they might also say that, during his course, he looks down upon wasted fields and deserted territories."

I should not be sorry, Usbek, to see a letter written to Madrid by a Spaniard travelling in France ; in my opinion, he could well avenge his country. What a vast field for a cool and thoughtful man ! I imagine he might begin his description of Paris in this way : —

"They have a house here for madmen ; it would naturally be supposed that it must be the largest building in the city. But no ; the remedy is quite small in comparison with the disease. No doubt the French, who are not highly esteemed among their neighbors, shut up a few madmen in this house, in order to persuade the world that those who are outside are sane."

At this point I take leave of my Spaniard. Farewell, my dear Usbek.

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXIX.

USBK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE

MOST legislators have been men of limited intellect, owing their elevated position to accident, and, in almost every case, guided by their prejudices and fancies.

They have apparently entirely misunderstood even the greatness and the dignity of their work ; they have amused

themselves with the creation of puerile institutions, by which they have indeed given satisfaction to little minds, but excited the contempt of men of good sense.

They have dealt exclusively with useless details and particular cases: and this is the characteristic of the narrow-minded who can only see things in their parts, and are incapable of embracing the whole in one general view.

Some have affected to use a language different from the vernacular, — an absurdity in the case of a framer of laws: how can laws be obeyed, if they are not known?

They have often, without any necessity, abolished those they found established, thus causing those disorders among the people that are inseparable from change.

It is true that, because of a singularity existing in the nature of man rather than in his spirit, it is sometimes necessary to change certain laws. But such a case rarely occurs, and, when it does, it requires the nicest handling. Every possible solemnity should then be observed, and every possible precaution should be adopted with the view of convincing the people that laws are very holy, since so many formalities are necessary for their abrogation.

Often legislators have made their laws too subtle, and have followed out logical ideas rather than natural equity. Such laws were afterwards found too harsh, and it was thought that equity required they should be ignored; but this remedy created a new disease. Whatever the nature of laws may be, it is always necessary to obey them and to regard them as the public conscience, to which the conscience of the individual must always conform.

It must be confessed, however, that some legislators have, in one particular instance, exhibited considerable wisdom; it is in giving fathers great authority over their children. Nothing is more calculated to lessen the labors of magistrates and to empty the courts of justice; nothing, in fine,

is the cause of greater tranquillity in a state, for its manners and morals often make better citizens than its laws.

Of all powers, this is the least subject to abuse ; of all magistracies, this is the most sacred ; it alone does not depend on conventions, but has even preceded them.

It has been remarked that in the countries in which the larger number of rewards and punishments is left to the discretion of fathers, the families are the best ordered : fathers resemble the Creator of the universe, who, although He can lead men by His love, does not forbear from drawing them to Himself by the motives of hope and fear.

I must not finish this letter without calling your attention to the singular turn of mind of the French. They are said to have retained an infinite number of things from the Roman laws, that are useless or worse than useless ; but they have not retained the paternal power, which these laws have established as the primary legitimate authority.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXX.

THE GRAND EUNUCH TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

YESTERDAY, some Armenians brought a young Circassian slave to the seraglio, whom they wished to sell. I conducted her into the secret apartments of the seraglio, undressed her, and examined her with the eyes of a judge, and the more I examined her, the more charms I found in her. A virginal modesty seemed anxious to hide them from my view ; I saw all that it cost her to obey : she blushed at seeing herself naked, even before me, although I have been released from the passions that alarm chastity, and am entirely freed from the dominion of the sex, being now merely



1. 1. 1.



the minister of modesty in its most unrestrained actions, a being whose looks inspire nothing but purity and innocence.

As soon as I had judged her worthy of you, I lowered my eyes, threw a scarlet mantle over her shoulders, placed a gold ring on her finger, prostrated myself at her feet, and adored her as the queen of your heart; I then paid the Armenians, and concealed her from all eyes. Happy Usbek! you possess more beauties than all the palaces of the Orient enclose. What a pleasure it will be for you to behold, on your return, the most ravishing objects in all Persia, and to see your seraglio bloom again with new delights when time and possession have wrought the destruction of the old ones!

The Seraglio at Fatme, the first day of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1715

LETTER LXXXI.

USBK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

SINCE I have been in Europe, my dear Rhedi, I have seen many forms of government; it is not the same here as in Asia, where the rules of policy are everywhere alike.

I have often asked myself which of all these forms of government was the most conformable to reason, and my conclusion has been that the best government is that which attains its object with the least friction; so that the one which governs men in accordance with their propensities and inclinations is the most perfect.

If the people are as submissive under a mild government as under a severe one, the first is preferable, since it is more in accordance with reason, while severity is a motive foreign to reason.

Be assured, my dear Rhedi, that the fact of the penalties in a state being more or less cruel does not make the laws the better obeyed. In countries where the punishments are moderate, they are as much dreaded as in those where they are tyrannical and frightful.

Whether a government be mild or cruel, punishments ought always to be graduated: a penalty more or less great ought to be inflicted on a crime more or less great. Our imagination is influenced by the manners of the country in which we live: eight days' imprisonment, or a light fine, has as much effect on the spirit of a European, brought up in a country where the manners are gentle, as the loss of an arm has upon an Asiatic. A certain degree of fear is proportioned to a certain degree of punishment, and each shares this fear in his own way: the infamy attached to some penalties would drive a Frenchman to despair, while these same penalties would not rob a Turk of a quarter of an hour's sleep.

And yet I do not see that police regulations, justice, and equity are better observed in Turkey, Persia, or the empire of the Mogul than in the republics of Holland, Venice, and even in England; neither do I see that fewer crimes are committed there, or that men, intimidated by the greatness of the penalties, are more submissive to the laws.

On the contrary, I remark a source of injustice and venation in the midst of these very states.

I find that even the prince, who is himself the law, is less master there than anywhere else.

I notice that at times when great severity is exercised, there are always tumults, of which no one seems to be the leader, and that, when authority based on violence is contemned, no one has any longer sufficient power to restore it;

That the very despair of impunity strengthens disorder and increases its intensity;

That, in these states, a petty revolt never occurs, and there is no interval between discontent and sedition ;

That in these states great events are not necessarily preceded by great causes ; on the contrary, the least accident produces a great revolution, often as unforeseen by those who cause it, as by those who suffer from it.

When Osman, Emperor of the Turks, was deposed, none of those who committed the crime had ever dreamed of committing it ; they merely asked as suppliants that a wrong done them should be rectified. A voice which was unknown to everybody issued from the crowd by chance ; the name of Mustapha was pronounced, and suddenly Mustapha was emperor.

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1715.

LETTER LXXXII.

NARGUM, PERSIAN ENVOY IN MUSCOVY, TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

OF all the nations of the world, my dear Usbek, none has surpassed that of the Tartars in the greatness and glory of their conquests. This people is the true ruler of the universe ; all the others seem to be designed for its service. It is alike the founder and the destroyer of empires ; in all times, it has given marks of its power over the earth ; in all ages, it has been the scourge of nations.

The Tartars have conquered China twice, and still hold it in subjection.

They dominate the vast countries that form the empire of the Mogul.

Masters of Persia, they sit upon the throne of Cyrus and Gustapes. They have subdued Muscovy. Under the name of Turks, they have made immense conquests in Europe,

Asia, and Africa, and their sway is supreme over these three quarters of the universe.

And, to speak of times more remote, it was from their loins that issued all the races which overturned the Roman Empire.

What are the conquests of Alexander in comparison to those of Zenghis Khan?

All that this victorious nation has lacked is a historian to celebrate the memory of its marvellous deeds.

How many immortal achievements have been buried in oblivion! How many empires have been founded by them, whose origin is to us unknown! This warlike nation, solely occupied with its present glory, sure of conquering in every age, never thought of winning renown in the future by the memory of its deeds in the past.

Moscow, the 4th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1715.

LETTER LXXXIII.

RICA TO IBBEN

AT'SMYRNA.

ALTHOUGH the French are very fond of talking, there is nevertheless a kind of silent dervishes among them, called Carthusians. It is said that they cut out their tongues when they enter the convent; and it were much to be desired that all the other dervishes should cut off in the same fashion all that which their profession renders useless to them.

By the way, talking of these dumb individuals puts me in mind of others more singular still, who have a very extraordinary gift. They are those who know how to talk without saying anything, and who carry on a conversation for two hours without it being possible to find out what it is all about, or to retain a single word of what they have said.

This sort of people are adored by the women ; though not so much as some others who have received from nature the pleasing talent of smiling at the right time, that is to say, every moment, and who approve with transport all that the ladies say.

But they have attained the highest degree of wit when they are capable of seeing bright little turns and clever little touches in the tritest commonplaces.

I am acquainted with others who make a capital hit by introducing inanimate things into their conversation, and by causing their embroidered coats, white perukes, snuff-boxes, canes, and gloves to talk for them.

Another good plan to gain attention is to create a terrible racket with your coach, while yet in the street, and then to hammer away at the knocker as loud as you can. This foretaste makes the rest of the discourse come out easy, and when the prologue is beautiful, it renders all the nonsense that comes afterwards endurable.

I assure you that these little talents, to which no attention is paid among us, are here of the utmost utility to those who are fortunate enough to possess them, and that a man of good sense has no chance of competing with them.

PARIS, the 6th of the moon of Rebiab 2, 1715.

LETTER LXXXIV.

USBEC TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

If there is a God, my dear Rhedi, He must necessarily be just ; for if He were not, He would be the worst and most imperfect of all beings.

Justice is a conventional relation, but which exists really between two things ; this relation is always the same, who-

ever contemplates it, whether God, or an angel, or finally, man himself.

It is true that men do not always see these relations ; often indeed, when they do see them, they turn away from them ; for their own interest is always that which they see best. Justice may raise her voice, but she will have some difficulty in being heard in the tumult of human passion.

Men act unjustly, because it is their interest to do so, and they prefer their own satisfaction to that of others. In acting, they always have in view the effect their action will have on themselves : no one is bad for nothing ; every one must have a determining motive, and that motive is self-interest.

But God cannot commit an injustice ; on the supposition that He perceives what is just, He must necessarily follow it : for, as He has no need of anything and is self-sufficing. He would otherwise be the most wicked of all beings, since He would have no motive for being wicked.

Consequently, though there were no God, we should always love justice, that is, we should endeavor to resemble that Being of whom we have formed so grand an idea, and who, if He existed, would necessarily be just. Even if we succeeded in freeing ourselves from the yoke of religion we should not free ourselves from that of equity.

You see, Rhedi, why I consider justice eternal, and independent of human conventions ; and, if she were dependent on them, that would be a truth so terrible that we should be forced to conceal it from ourselves.

We are surrounded by men stronger than we are ; they can injure us in a thousand different ways, and can do so three fourths of the time with impunity ; what tranquillity does not the knowledge give us that in the heart of all these men is an innate principle which fights in our favor, and shelters us from their attacks !

Except such were the case, we should be in a state of continual alarm ; we should pass in front of men, as if in front

of lions ; and we should never for a moment be sure of our life, our property, or our honor.

All these thoughts excite my indignation against those philosophers who represent God as a Being who makes a tyrannical use of His power ; who make Him act in a manner we ourselves would shrink from through fear of offending Him ; who load Him with all the imperfections He punishes in us, and, by their contradictory opinions, represent Him at one time as an evil Being, at another as a Being who hates evil and punishes it.

What a satisfaction must it be for the man who examines himself to discover that he has a righteous heart ! That pleasure, austere though it be, should ravish him. He perceives that his nature renders him as superior to those who have it not, as it does to bears and tigers. Yes, Rhedi, if I was sure of always obeying the voice of justice, I would believe myself the most exalted of mankind.

PARIS, the first of the moon of Gemmadi 1, 1715.

LETTER LXXXV.

RICA TO —.

I VISITED the Invalides yesterday ; I would rather, were I a prince, have founded this establishment than have won three battles. The hand of a great monarch is visible on every part of it. I think it the noblest institution in the world.

What a grand spectacle it is to behold, gathered within its walls, all those who have bled for their country and lived only to defend it ! and who, still possessed of the same courage, but not of the same strength, only complain of their impotence, because it hinders them from sacrificing themselves for it once more !

What nobler sight than that of those disabled warriors observing as strict a discipline, in their retirement, as if they were constrained to it by the presence of an enemy, seeking their last satisfaction in the semblance of war, and sharing their heart and soul between the duties of religion and those of their profession !

I should like to see the names of those who have died for their country preserved in the temples and written in registers which would be the fountain-head of all glory and nobility.

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Gemmadi 1, 1715.

LETTER LXXXVI.

— USBEK TO MIRZA

AT ISPAHAN.

YOU are aware, Mirza, that certain ministers of Shah Soliman formed the design of obliging all the Armenians of Persia to either quit the kingdom or become Mahometans, thinking that the country would continue polluted as long as it kept these infidels in its bosom.

It would have been all over with the greatness of Persia, if, on that occasion, blind devotion had been listened to.

It is not known why the project failed ; neither those who planned it, nor those who rejected it, had any idea of what the consequences would be : chance did what reason and policy would never have accomplished, and saved the kingdom from a peril greater than it would have incurred by the loss of three battles or the capture of two cities.

By the proscription of the Armenians, it was intended to destroy all the merchants and almost all the artisans in the realm. I am sure that the great Shah Abbas would have preferred to lose his two arms rather than sign such an order.

The persecution of which the Guebres have been the victims on the part of our zealous Mahometans has compelled them to escape in crowds to India, and has deprived Persia of that laborious nation, which, by its intelligent devotion to agriculture, was alone fit to overcome the sterility of our soil.

But fanaticism had still in its power to deal a final blow at the interests of the country: it could ruin industry; as a consequence, the empire fell by its own act, the natural result being that the very religion it was intended to render so flourishing fell also.

Speaking without prejudice, I am inclined to believe, Mirza, that, after all, a diversity of religions in a country may be a benefit.

It has been noticed that the members of a merely tolerated religion render more useful services to the country, as a general rule, than those of the predominant creed, because, not being allowed to fill any public office, or attain any distinction except that arising from the possession of wealth and affluence, they are impelled to acquire these by engaging in the most laborious occupations.

Moreover, as all religions contain precepts useful to society, it is well that these precepts be zealously observed; now, nothing can be more conducive to this than a multiplicity of creeds.

They are rivals, constantly on the watch for one another's failings. The individuals composing them are jealous of the reputation of their particular sect. Each of them is on his guard, and fears to do things that would redound to the discredit of his own religion, and excite the unrelenting scorn and condemnation of the opposite party.

It has therefore been shown that the introduction of a new sect into a state is always the surest method of correcting the abuses of the old one.

It is all very well to say that the toleration of several

creeds in a state is contrary to the interests of the sovereign. Though all the sects in the world were gathered under his dominion, it would not do him any harm; for there is not a single one of them in which the duties of obedience and submission are not ordained and preached.

I acknowledge that history is full of religious wars; but it is an indisputable fact that these wars have not been produced by the multiplicity of religions, but rather by the intolerance of the dominant creed.

This spirit of proselytism the Jews inherited from the Egyptians, and it then spread, like some epidemic disease, among the Mahometans and Christians.

It is a kind of frenzy, the progress of which can only be regarded as a total eclipse of human reason.

For, in fine, even if the attempt to trouble the conscience of our neighbor was not in itself inhuman, if the manifold evil effects which spring from it had no existence, the mere contemplation of such a course would be an evidence of mental unsoundness.

The man who would have me change my religion does so doubtless because he would never change his own, no matter what force was brought to bear upon him: yet he thinks it strange that I should refuse to do a thing he would not himself do for the empire of the whole world!

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of Gemmadi 1, 1715.

LETTER LXXXVII.

RICA TO ———.

It would seem as if in this country every individual of a family exercised the right of self-government: the authority of a husband over his wife, a father over his children, a master over his slaves, is almost a shadow; the law inter-

meddles in all their dissensions ; and you may take for granted that it is always in opposition to the jealous husband, the afflicted father, and the exacting master.

I went the other day to a place where justice is dispensed. Before reaching it, you have to run the gauntlet of a multitude of young saleswomen who call to you in seductive tones. The spectacle at first is rather attractive ; but it becomes lugubrious when you enter the great halls ; there you see none but people whose garb is graver even than the expression of their faces. At last you reach the sacred spot where all family secrets are revealed and the most hidden actions brought to light.

On one side, a modest young person makes confession of the torments of a virginity too long preserved, her struggles and her dolorous resistance ; she is so little elated by the victory that she is always expressing an anticipation of defeat in the near future ; and, that her father may not be ignorant of her eager desires, she exposes them to the whole people.

A shameless woman comes forward next, and recapitulates her trespasses against her husband, as a ground for separating from him.

With equal modesty, another proclaims that she is tired of bearing the name, without enjoying the privileges of a wife : she reveals the hidden mysteries of the wedding night ; she is willing to submit to the gaze of the most skilful experts, so that a decision of the court may restore her all the rights of virginity.

There are some even who dare to challenge their husbands, and who demand a public ordeal : a test rendered exceedingly difficult by the presence of witnesses, and as infamous for the wife who succeeds as for the husband who fails.

A crowd of ravished or seduced girls make men out to be much worse than they are. This tribunal resounds

with the cries of love : angry fathers, deceived daughters, faithless lovers, and aggrieved husbands are the universal theme.

According to the law observed in this quarter, every child born during marriage is assumed to be the husband's. It does n't matter if he have good reasons for not believing this to be the case ; the law believes it for him, and relieves him from the necessity of all unpleasant inquiries and scruples.

In this court, the decision is determined by a majority of votes ; but experience teaches that a minority would be more likely to be right ; and this is very natural : the number of well-balanced minds is limited, while there is a pretty general agreement that the number of ill-balanced ones is infinite.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1715.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

RICA TO ———.

MAN is said to be a sociable animal. If this principle is correct, the Frenchman, in my opinion, is more a man than anybody else ; he is pre-eminently *the* man : for he seems to have been made solely for society.

But I have noticed among them that certain persons are not only sociable, but are themselves society universal. They multiply themselves in all corners, and people in an instant the four quarters of a city ; a hundred men of this species are more in evidence than two thousand citizens ; to the eye of a stranger they would seem to be able to repair the ravages of the plague or of famine. One of the questions debated among the schoolmen was whether

a body could be in several places at once ; they furnish the proof of what the philosophers called in question.

They are always in a terrible hurry, for they are always having an important affair on hand — it is to ask every one they see whence he comes and whither he goes.

It would be impossible to knock it out of their heads that it is good form to visit the public individually, without reckoning their visits to it in the aggregate in those places where crowds do most collect ; but, as these latter visits are necessarily brief, they count for nothing in their code of social observance.

Their performances on the knocker make the doors of houses more tired than could storms and tempests. They spend their lives in attending funerals, in condoling sincerely, and in nuptial congratulating. The king does not bestow a favor on one of his subjects without it costing them the price of a carriage, wherein they proceed to the happy recipient to testify their joy. At length, they return home, utterly fatigued, to take that repose which will enable them to resume on the morrow their painful functions.

One of them died the other day of exhaustion ; and this was the epitaph engraved on his tomb : Here rests one who never rested. He was present at five hundred and thirty funerals. He rejoiced at the birth of two thousand six hundred and eighty children. The pensions he congratulated his friends on receiving — always in different terms — amounted to two million six hundred thousand livres. The number of furlongs he has trotted along in the city were nine thousand six hundred ; the number in the country, thirty-six. His conversation was amusing. He had a capital-stock of three hundred and sixty-five stories always within reach of his hand ; he was also in possession, ever since the days of his youth, of one hundred and eighteen apothegms taken from the ancients ; these he fired off when a brilliant opportunity was the mark. At length

he died in the sixtieth year of his age. Traveller, here I hold my peace : for how could I have ever done telling thee all he did and all he saw ?

PARIS, the 3d of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1715.

LETTER LXXXIX.

USBEC TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

At Paris liberty and equality reign supreme. A man's birth or virtue, or even his services in war, however brilliant these may be, do not save him from being confounded with the crowd. Jealousy of rank is unknown. It is said that the first man in Paris is he who keeps the best carriage horses.

A great lord is a man who sees the king, speaks to the ministers, has ancestors, debts, and pensions. If he can, in addition to this, conceal his indolence under an appearance of business, or a feigned attachment to pleasure, he believes himself to be the most fortunate of mankind. In Persia, the only *grande*s are those to whom the monarch has given a share in the government. Here, there are people who may be styled *grande*s, as far as their birth is concerned, but they have no influence in the state. The kings are like skilful artisans, who, in executing their works, always make use of the simplest tools.

Favor is the great divinity of Frenchmen. The minister is her high priest, and offers her many victims. Those who surround her are not dressed in white : sometimes sacrificers and sometimes sacrificed, they devote themselves to their idol along with the whole people.

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1715.

LETTER XC.

USBK TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

THE desire of glory does not differ from that instinct which all creatures have for their self-preservation. We acquire through it a new life, which becomes as precious to us as that which we have received from the Creator. But, as all men are not equally attached to life, so they are not equally affected by the prospect of glory. This noble passion is, indeed, always engraved in their hearts, but imagination and education modify it in a thousand various ways.

This difference, which is found between man and man, makes itself also felt between people and people, and that in a higher degree.

It may be laid down as a maxim that, in every state, the desire of glory is proportional to the growth and diminution of the liberty of the subject : glory is never the companion of slavery.

A man of sound judgment said to me the other day : " In many respects, we are freer in France than you are in Persia ; as a consequence, our love of glory is greater than yours. This happy conception will make a Frenchman do with pleasure and enjoyment what your sultans can only obtain from their subjects by placing constantly before their eyes the alternative of rewards and punishments."

"Therefore, among us, the prince is always jealous of the honor of the meanest of his subjects.- For its defence there are tribunals which are held in high estimation ; it is the treasury of the nation, and the only treasury of which the sovereign is not master, because he cannot be so without dealing a deadly blow to his own interests. So, if a subject finds himself wounded in his honor by his prince, either by seeing another preferred before him, or by the

slightest mark of contempt, he at once leaves his court, employment and service, and retires into private life.

"The difference between our troops and yours is that, in the case of the latter, composed of slaves, who are naturally cowards, the fear of death can be surmounted only by the fear of punishment; now this, as it were, dulls the soul by introducing into it a new species of terror; while the former rush into the thickest of the fight with joyful enthusiasm, and fear is banished by a delight superior to it.

"But the sanctuary of honor, fame, and virtue has apparently its firmest foundation in republics and in countries where the word Fatherland may be boldly uttered. In Rome, Athens, Lacedæmon, honor was sufficient recompense for the most signal services. An oaken or laurel crown, a statue, a panegyric, was the glorious reward for battle won, or city taken.

"There a man who had done a fine action found sufficient requital in the action itself. Whenever he saw a fellow-countryman, he had the pleasurable feeling that he was his benefactor. The number of his fellow-citizens was the measure of that of the services he performed in their behalf. Every man is capable of doing good to his neighbor; but to contribute to the happiness of an entire community is to resemble the Gods.

"Now, must not this noble emulation be entirely extinct in the hearts of your Persians, among whom employments and dignities depend solely on the whim of the sovereign? Reputation and virtue are regarded as imaginary, if not accompanied by the favor of the prince, for of that favor are they born and with it they die. Though a man have the esteem of the public, he is never sure that to-morrow he may not be dishonored: he is a general one day; on the next, the prince makes him his cook, and his only chance of attaining fame is by making a good ragout."

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1715.

LETTER XCL

USBK TO THE SAME

AT SMYRNA .

FROM this general passion of the French for glory has been formed in the minds of individuals a certain something which they call "the point of honor." Properly speaking, it is the characteristic of every profession, but peculiarly so of that of military men; among them it is the indispensable condition. It would be very hard for me to convey to you an idea of its meaning: we have nothing exactly like it in Persia.

Formerly the French, and especially the nobles, obeyed no other laws except those of this point of honor: by them they regulated the whole conduct of their lives, and these same laws were so severe that a man would shrink, under a penalty worse than death, not only from infringing them, but even from daring to elude the most trivial clause in any one of them.

When they had to settle their differences, there was only one method prescribed for this purpose: the duel, which resolved all difficulties; but the system had one serious evil, — it was that persons not immediately interested often engaged in the combat.

However slight the acquaintance of one man with another, he was obliged to be a party to the quarrel, and pay with his person, just the same as if he himself had ground for anger. He always felt honored by such a choice and by a preference so flattering; and a person who would not give four pistoles to a man to save him and all his family from the gibbet, would make no difficulty about risking his life for him a thousand times.

This method of deciding a question was a poor conception enough; for it did not follow that a man had right on

his side, because he was stronger and readier than another. Kings have therefore forbidden duelling under very severe penalties, but in vain : honor, which wishes always to reign, revolts, and refuses to recognize the laws.

Accordingly, the French are in a very perturbed condition ; for the laws of honor compel a gentleman to avenge himself when he has been insulted ; and, on the other hand, justice punishes him with the severest penalties when he has avenged himself. If a man obey the laws of honor, he dies on the scaffold ; if he obey the laws of justice, he is forever shunned by his fellow-men ; this, then, is the cruel alternative, either to die, or to be unworthy to live.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1715.

LETTER XCII.

USBK TO RUSTAN

AT ISPAHAN.

AN individual has appeared here who is a caricature of a Persian ambassador, and insolently makes sport of the two greatest kings in the world. He brings with him presents to the French monarch which ours would not offer to the king of Irimetta or of Georgia, and by his base avarice, he has dishonored the majesty of two empires.

He has made himself ridiculous before a people who claim to be the most polished in Europe, and has given the West occasion to say that the King of Kings reigns over none but barbarians.

He has received honors he seemed unwilling to accept ; and, as if the court of France had the honor of Persia more at heart than he, it forced him to appear with due dignity before a people who despise him.

Do not mention this at Ispahan; spare the head of a miserable creature. I am not willing that our ministers should punish him for their own imprudence and for the unworthy choice they made.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1715.

LETTER XCIII.

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THE monarch who reigned so long is no more. He made people talk much about him during his life; every one was silent at his death. Firm and courageous in his last moments, he appeared to yield to destiny alone. So died the great Shah Abbas, after filling the whole earth with his name.

Do not believe that moral reflections are the only considerations, to which this great event has given rise. Each has thought of his own affairs, and how they might be advantageously affected by the change. The king, great-grandson of the defunct monarch, being only five years old, a prince, his uncle, has been declared regent of the realm.

The late king made a will limiting the authority of the regent; but that able prince went before the parliament, and, setting forth the rights to which his birth entitles him, caused them to annul the settlement made by the monarch, who apparently wished to survive himself and claimed to rule even after his death.

Parliaments resemble those ruins which, though trodden under foot, always recall some temple, made famous by the ancient religion of a people. Their functions now are almost entirely judicial; their authority grows weaker every day, and must continue to do so, except some unforeseen conjuncture restore them to strength and vitality. These great

bodies have followed the destiny of human things : they have yielded to time, which destroys everything ; to moral corruption, which weakens everything ; and to absolute power, which overturns everything.

But the regent, who wished to become popular, appeared at first to respect this image of public liberty ; and, as if it was his purpose to raise from the ground the temple and the idol, he was desirous that the parliament should be regarded as the support of the monarchy and the foundation of all legitimate authority.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1715.

LETTER XCIV.

USBK TO HIS BROTHER,

SANTON AT THE MONASTERY OF CASBIN.

I HUMBLE and prostrate myself before you, holy santon ; I regard your footprints as the apple of my eye. Your sanctity is so great that you seem to possess the heart of our holy prophet ; your austerities astonish Heaven itself ; the angels have looked down upon you from the pinnacle of glory, and have said : “ How is it that he is still on earth, since his spirit is with us, and floats around the throne which is upborne by the clouds ? ”

And why should I not honor you, — I who have been taught by our doctors that all dervishes, even though they be infidels, have always an impress of holiness that excites the reverence of true believers, and that God has chosen unto Himself in every corner of the earth souls purer than others, which He has separated from the impious world, in order that their mortifications and their fervent prayers might suspend His anger, ready to fall on so many rebellious nations ?

Marvellous are the tales the Christians tell of their first santons, who flocked in thousands to the frightful deserts of the Thebaïd, and whose chiefs were Paul, Antony, and Pacomus. If what is said of them be true, their lives are as full of prodigies as those of our most sacred imaums. They sometimes passed ten whole years without seeing a single man, but dwelt night and day with demons, and were incessantly tormented by these malignant spirits; they found them in bed; they found them at table; no refuge from them anywhere. If all this be true, venerable santon, it must be confessed that no people ever lived in worse company.

Sensible Christians regard all these stories as a very natural allegory, depicting the wretchedness of human life. In vain do we seek quiet in a desert; temptations follow us thither; our passions, figured by the demons, never wholly leave us; those monsters of the heart, those illusions of the mind, those vain phantoms of error and falsehood, are always at hand to seduce us, and attack us even in our fasts and hair-shirts, that is to say, in the very things that constitute our strength.

As for me, venerable santon, I know that the ambassador of God has enchained Satan and hurled him into the abyss; he has purified the earth, formerly the seat of his empire, and rendered it worthy to be the dwelling-place of angels and prophets.

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of Chahban, 1715.

LETTER XCV.

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

WHENEVER I have heard public law discussed, the subject has always been preceded by a careful inquiry into the origin

of society, which appears to me absurd. If men did not form a society, if they avoided and fled one another, it would then be necessary to ask the reason of this, and inquire why they kept apart ; but they all have a mutually related existence from their birth : a son is born near his father, and stays there ; now you have society and the cause of society.

Public law is better known in Europe than in Asia ; however, it may be said that the passions of princes, the patience of their subjects, and the flattery of writers have corrupted all its principles.

As it stands to-day, it is a science which teaches princes just to what point they may carry the violation of justice without violating their own interests. Can you conceive, Rhedi, of such a purpose as this ? — to deaden the sensibilities of kings, they would reduce iniquity to a system, would prescribe its regulations, settle its principles, and from these principles infer the natural consequences !

The boundless power of our sublime sultans, which is a law unto itself, produces nothing more monstrous than this shameful art which would bend justice itself, inflexible though it be.

It would look, my dear Rhedi, as if, forsooth, there were two sorts of justice, and these quite different : one, regulating the affairs of individuals, and reigning in civil law ; the other, regulating the differences arising between nation and nation, and tyrannizing in international law, — as if international law was not itself a civil law, not indeed of a particular country, but of the world.

I will explain in another letter my thoughts on this subject.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Ziilhage, 1716.

LETTER XCVI.

USBK TO THE SAME.

MAGISTRATES ought to dispense justice between citizen and citizen, and every nation between itself and other nations. In this second administration of justice, no maxims can be employed different from those employed in the first.

There is seldom need of a third party to arbitrate between nation and nation, because the questions in dispute are always clear and easy to determine. The interests of two nations are generally so distinct that, in order to discover where justice lies, it is only necessary to love it.

It is not the same with the differences that occur between individuals. If they live in society, their interests are so intermingled and blended, and so varied in character, that a third party is needed to lighten what the cupidity of the other two obscures.

There are only two kinds of just wars: those made to repel an enemy who attacks, and those made to succor an ally who is attacked.

There would be no justice in waging war on account of the private quarrels of a prince, unless the wrong was so grave as to justify the death of the prince or people committing it. Thus a prince cannot make war because he has been refused an honor due to him, or because of some disrespect shown his ambassadors, and other such things, any more than a private individual can kill a person who refuses him precedence. The reason is that, as a declaration of war ought to be an act of justice, in which it is always necessary that the punishment fit the crime, it must be ascertained whether he upon whom war is declared deserves death. For to make war on any one, is to wish to punish him with death.

In international law, the severest act of justice is war, since its object is the destruction of a community.

Reprisals are of the second degree. To measure the penalty by the crime is a law which the tribunals have not been able to refrain from observing.

A third act of justice is to deprive a prince of the advantages he may draw from us, always adjusting the penalty to the offence.

The fourth act of justice, which ought to be the most frequent, is the renunciation of all alliance with the people who have given cause of complaint. This penalty corresponds to that of banishment, established by the tribunals for the purpose of cutting off the guilty from the community. Thus a prince, whose alliance we renounce, is thereby cut off from our community, and is no longer one of our members.

No greater affront can be offered a prince than to renounce his alliance, and no greater honor can be paid him than to contract one with him. There is nothing so honorable to men, and even so useful, as to see others taking thought of their preservation.

But, in order that an alliance may be binding, it must be just: thus, an alliance made between two nations to oppress a third, is not legitimate, and may be violated without crime.

It is not even consistent with the honor and dignity of a prince to ally himself with a tyrant. It is said that a certain Egyptian monarch expostulated with a king of Samos on his tyranny and cruelty, and summoned him to change his conduct; as he did not do so, he sent word to him that he renounced his friendship and alliance.

Conquest does not give a right of itself. As long as a people subsists, it is a pledge of peace and of the reparation of wrong; if it is dispersed or destroyed, it is a monument of tyranny.

Treaties of peace are so sacred among men, that it would seem as if they were the voice of nature demanding her rights. They are all legitimate when the conditions are such

that both nations can preserve themselves ; unless this is the case, the community which must perish, if deprived of its natural defence by peace, may seek it in war.

For nature, although she has established different degrees of strength and weakness among men, has often equalized strength and weakness by means of despair.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Zilhage, 1716.

LETTER XCVII.

THE FIRST EUNUCH TO USBEK.

AT PARIS.

SEVERAL yellow women have reached here from the Kingdom of Visapour. I have purchased one of them for your brother, the governor of Mazenderan, who sent me, a month ago, his sublime commands and a hundred tomans. I am an expert as far as women are concerned, especially as they can no longer deceive me, and my eyesight is not disturbed by the throbbings of my heart.

I have never before seen such regular and perfect beauty ; her sparkling eyes give wonderful animation to her face, and set off a glowing complexion that would cast into the shade all the charms of Circassia.

The first eunuch of a merchant of Ispahan bid against me for her ; but she turned away disdainfully from his eyes, and seemed to invite mine, as if she would say to me that a vile tradesman was not worthy of her, and she was destined for a more illustrious spouse.

I confess I feel a secret joy within my breast when I think of the charms of this lovely person ; it seems to me as if I beheld her entering the seraglio of your brother. I take a delight in foreseeing the astonishment of all his wives ; the imperious grief of some, the mute, but more painful, afflic-

tion of others ; the malicious condolences of those who hope no more, and the enraged ambition of those who hope still.

I am going from end to end of the kingdom in order to change the aspect of an entire seraglio. What passions am I not about to arouse ! What fears and sorrows am I not preparing !

However, in spite of this internal disturbance, matters external will be as quiet as ever ; great revolutions will be hidden in the depths of the heart ; sorrow will be crushed down and joy restrained ; obedience will not be less thorough, nor the rules of order less inflexible. Gentleness, being constrained to outward show, will emerge even from the depths of despair.

We notice that the more women we have under our eye, the less trouble they give us. There is then a greater necessity of pleasing, less facility for forming combinations, and more examples of submission, all of which serve to fetter them. They are constantly on the watch for one another ; it looks as if they worked with us to render themselves more dependent. They perform almost half our labor, and open our eyes when we close them. What do I say ? They irritate their master against their rivals, and see not how close they are to the punishment which these have to endure.

But all this, magnificent lord, all this is nothing without the presence of the master. What can we do with the vain phantom of an authority which is never communicated to us in its entirety ? We are but feeble representatives of the half of yourself ; we can only show them a severity that renders us odious. You temper fear with hope more absolute when you caress than when you threaten.

Return, then, magnificent lord, return, and bear to every quarter of your domicile the impress of your sovereign sway. Come and assuage despairing passion ; come and remove every excuse for straying ; come and appease mur-

muring love, rendering even duty lovable. Come, in fine, and relieve your faithful eunuchs from a burden that grows heavier every day.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the moon of Zilhage, 1716

LETTER XCVIII.

USBK TO KASSEIN, DERVISH OF THE MOUNTAIN OF GARON.

O WISE dervish, whose inquisitive mind is illuminated by so many various sciences, hearken to what I am about to tell you.

There are philosophers here, who, indeed, have not attained the summits of oriental wisdom ; they have not been wafted up to the luminous throne, ~~nor have they~~ heard the words ineffable, wherewith angelic choirs resound, nor felt the dread access of lunacy divine ; but, left to themselves, deprived of these holy marvels, they silently pursue the foot-prints of human reason.

You would never believe whither this guide has led them. They have interpreted chaos, and explained, by a simple mechanism, the order of divine architecture. The Author of nature gave motion to matter ; and this was all that was necessary in order to produce the prodigious variety of effects to be found in the universe.

Ordinary legislators may propose laws for the regulation of human society, laws subject to change, like the minds of those who propose and of those who obey them : those speak only of general, immutable, eternal laws, which are obeyed, without any exception, with order, regularity, and illimitable readiness in the immensity of space.

And what think you, O man divine, are these laws ? You imagine, perhaps, that you are about to enter into the coun-

sels and to be astonished by the sublimity of mystery ; you renounce in advance all idea of comprehending ; you are content to admire.

But you will soon change your thoughts : these laws do not dazzle us by an assumed awfulness ; it is because they are so simple that they have been so lightly esteemed, and it is only after much reflection that all the fecundity and all the extent of them have been recognized.

The first of these laws is that every body tends to describe a straight line, unless it meet with some obstacle which turns it aside ; and the second, which is only a consequence of the first, is that every body revolving round a centre has a tendency to fly from it, because the farther it is from that centre, the nearer is its course to a straight line.

And now, O sublime dervish, you have the key to the secrets of nature ; here you have certain fruitful principles, and from these principles consequences may be drawn of which we have as yet no conception, as I intend proving to you in a private letter.

The knowledge of five or six truths has rendered their philosophy full of miracles, and enabled them to perform more wonders and prodigies than all those which are related of our holy prophets.

For I have a strong persuasion that if one of our doctors was asked to weigh in a balance all the air that surrounds the earth, or to measure all the water that falls each year upon its surface, he would be rather embarrassed ; and he would have thought over the problem at least more than four times, before telling the number of leagues sound travels in an hour, the time it takes for a ray of light from the sun to come to us, the number of fathoms between the earth and the planet Saturn, or the curve according to which a ship should be cut in order to make it the best sailer possible.

Perhaps if some holy man had adorned the works of these

philosophers with lofty and sublime expressions, if he had introduced bold figures and mysterious allegories into them, he might have made a fine work, ranking next to the Koran.

However, if you will allow me to say what I feel, I do not care very much for the figurative style. Our Koran contains a great number of childish things ; at least so it appears to me, although I acknowledge they are rendered respectable by the force and vigor of the style. It would seem at first sight that inspired books are simply divine ideas stated in human language : on the contrary, in our inspired books, we find the language of God and the ideas of men ; as if, by some whimsical marvel, God had dictated the words and man had supplied the thoughts.

You will, perhaps, say that I speak too freely of what we hold most sacred ; you must consider this as the result of the independence characteristic of the country in which I live.

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Chahban, 1716.

(2) LETTER XCIX. 178

USBK TO IBEN

AT SMYRNA.

THERE is no country in the world in which fortune is so fickle as in this. Revolutions happen every ten years, which plunge the rich into misery, and raise the poor on rapid wings to the pinnacle of opulence. The former are astonished at their poverty ; the latter, at their affluence. The newly-made rich man admires the wisdom of Providence ; the poor man is amazed at the blind fatality of destiny.

Those who levy the taxes swim in wealth, and there are not many Tantaluses among them. When they enter on this business, they are in the lowest misery ; they are de-

Nouveau riche

spised like dirt when they are poor; when they become rich, they are rather looked up to; they like to be looked up to, so they use every effort to become rich.

They are at present in a dreadful situation. A Chamber of Justice — so called, apparently, because organized to strip them of their wealth — has been lately established. They can neither transfer nor conceal their property; for they are obliged to make an exact return of its value, under penalty of death: so they have to pass through a rather narrow defile, with money on one side and life on the other. To crown their misfortune, there is a minister, famous for his wit, who honors them with his jokes; indeed, for that matter, he makes a jest of all the deliberations of the council. It is not every day that ministers can be found disposed to make the people laugh, and this one is at least entitled to their gratitude for attempting to do so.

Nowhere has the corporation of footmen attained such a degree of estimation as in France: it is the nursery of great lords; it fills up the vacuum made in other ranks. Those who compose it take the place of unfortunate noblemen, ruined magistrates, and gentlemen killed in the fury of war; and when they are unable to do so in their own persons, they re-establish all the great families by means of their daughters, who are a sort of manure for the fertilization of mountainous and barren soils.

Wonderful, Ibben, do I find the ways of Providence in its distribution of riches. If wealth had been allotted to the good alone, the line between it and virtue would not have been marked out with sufficient distinctness, and so its worthlessness would not have been sufficiently recognized. But, when we examine the people who have the largest share of it, by dint of despising the wealthy, we at last come to despise wealth itself.

LETTER C.

RICA TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THE caprices of fashion among the French are really astonishing. They have forgotten how they were dressed last summer, they have still less knowledge as to how they will be dressed this winter; but, above all, you would never have any idea of how much it costs a husband to have his wife in the fashion. What would be the use of me describing to you their habiliments and adornments? A new fashion would come and destroy all my work, as it does that of their workwomen, and, before you had received my letter, all would be changed.

A woman who has stayed six months in the country returns from it almost as much of an antique as if she had lived there thirty years. The son does not recognize his mother's portrait, so strange does the dress in which she was painted appear to him; he imagines it is some fair American that is represented there, or else the painter has tried to express some fancy of his own.

Sometimes the coiffures go up slowly and come down suddenly — there has been a revolution! There was a time when their immense height placed the face of a woman in her middle; there was another when it was the feet that were in this position. The heels formed a pedestal that held them suspended. Would you believe it? architects have been obliged to raise or lower or widen doors, to keep up with the changes in the dresses of the women, and the rules of their art had to bend to such freaks. Sometimes a prodigious quantity of patches is seen on a face; look for them the next day and they are all gone. Formerly women had figures and teeth; to-day you don't see either. In this

changing nation, the daughters are differently made from their mothers, whatever critics may say to the contrary.

What I have said of their fashions may also be said of their manners and style of living. The French change their manners with the age of their king. The monarch could succeed even in making this people serious, if he chose to undertake the task. The prince impresses his mental characteristics on the court, the court on the city, and the city on the provinces. The soul of the sovereign is a mould in which all are formed.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Saphar, 1717.

LETTER CL.

RICA TO THE SAME.

I SPOKE to you the other day of the extraordinary fickleness of the French as to their fashions. The obstinacy with which they cling to them is inconceivable. The laws of fashion determine their opinion of other nations; to this standard everything is referred. All that swerves from it always appears to them ridiculous. I confess I cannot reconcile this furious devotion to fashion with the inconstancy which makes them change it every day.

When I told you they despised everything foreign I should have added that this is so only in the case of trifling matters; for, in important ones, they seem to want confidence in themselves so much as almost to be open to the charge of self-degradation.

They acknowledge cheerfully that other nations are wiser, provided it be granted that they are better dressed. They would willingly agree to accept the laws of a foreign nation if French peruquiers were in turn to legislate on the form of foreign wigs. Nothing makes them feel so proud as the

spectacle of their cooks reigning from north to south, and their hair-dressers having the *entree* into every dressing-room in Europe.

With these noble advantages, what does it matter if common-sense comes to them from other quarters, and if they borrow from their neighbors everything of importance in their political and civil government?

Who would ever think that, since more than ten centuries, the oldest and most puissant realm in Europe has been governed by laws not made for it? If the French had been conquered, this would have been hard enough to understand ; but it is they who are the conquerors.

They have abandoned the old laws made by their first kings in the general assemblies of the nation ; and it is a singular fact that the Roman laws they took in their place were partly made and partly arranged by emperors contemporaneous with their own legislators.

And, that their indebtedness might be complete, and that all their common-sense might come from elsewhere, they have adopted the constitutions of the Popes in their entirety, and have made them a new part of their law ; that is to say, a new species of servitude.

It is true that, in more recent times, some provincial and civic statutes have been drawn up ; but these are almost all taken from the Roman law.

This abundance of laws adopted and, so to speak, naturalized, is so great that it overwhelms both justice and judges. But these volumes of laws are nothing in comparison with the awful army of glossers, commentators, and compilers, men as weak in intellectual capacity as they are strong in virtue of their numbers.

This is not all : these foreign laws have introduced formalities which are the shame of human reason. It would be difficult to decide whether the introduction of formalism into jurisprudence has had more pernicious results than its

intrenchment in medicine ; whether its ravages have been greater under the robe of the jurisconsult than under the broad-brimmed hat of the physician ; and whether it has ruined more people in one case than it has killed in the other.

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of Saphar, 1717.

LETTER CIL

USBK TO —.

CONVERSATION here is eternally turning on the "Constitution." The other day I entered a house where I saw a corpulent individual with a ruddy complexion. He was saying in a loud voice, "I have issued my pastoral ; I shall not answer your objection ; but read that pastoral, and you will see that I have settled all doubts. I sweated over it, I can tell you," he added, pressing his hand to his forehead. "I had need of all my learning, and I have had to read many Latin authors." — "I can well believe it," said another man. "It is a fine work, and I defy that Jesuit who comes so often to see you, to make a better one." — "Read it then," answered the other, "and you are sure to learn more about these matters in a quarter of an hour than if I spoke to you for two." In this way he avoided engaging in conversation, and giving a display of his incapacity. But when he was pressed hard, he had to leave his intrenchments, and he began to utter many theological absurdities, in which he was supported with great respect by a dervish. On two of those present denying one of his principles, he at first said : "That is certain ; we have so decided, and we are infallible judges." — "But how," I asked, "are you infallible judges ?" — "Do you not know," he retorted, "that we are enlightened by the Holy Ghost ?" — "That is fortunate," I rejoined, "for after the manner in

which I heard you speak to-day, you have great need of enlightenment."

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Rebiab, 1717.

LETTER CIII.

USBEEK TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

THE most powerful states in Europe are those of the Emperor, and of the kings of France, Spain, and England. Italy and a great part of Germany are cut up into an infinite number of petty states, whose princes are, properly speaking, martyrs to sovereignty. Our glorious sultan has more wives than most of these princes have subjects. Those of Italy, not being united, are the most to be pitied; their states are open like caravansaries, in which they are obliged to lodge the first comers; they have, therefore, to ally themselves with great princes, with whom they share their fears rather than their friendship.

Most European governments are monarchical, or rather are styled so: for I do not know that there ever has been a really monarchical government; if there has, it cannot have existed long. It is a highly strained condition, which always ends in a despotism or a republic. Power can never be equally divided between prince and people; the balance is too difficult to keep: power must diminish on one side, while it increases on the other; but the advantage is generally with the prince, for he controls the army.

Accordingly, the power of the kings of Spain is very great; indeed, it may be said to be as great as they wish to make it; but they do not exercise it so extensively as our sultans. In the first place, because they are unwilling to offend the manners and religion of their subjects; and

secondly, because it is against their interests to carry it so far.

Nothing brings our princes nearer to the condition of their subjects than the immense power they exercise over them ; nothing renders them more subject to the reverses and the caprices of fortune.

Their custom of putting to death all those who displease them, for the slightest fault, destroys the proportion which ought to exist between crime and punishment, and which is the life of states and the harmony of empires ; and this proportion, being scrupulously observed by Christian princes, gives them an immense advantage over our sultans.

A Persian who by imprudence or ill fortune has drawn down upon his head the wrath of the monarch is certain of death ; the slightest error or the slightest caprice determines his fate. But, if he had attempted the life of his sovereign, if he had intended to deliver his fortresses to the enemy, he would have expiated the crime by the loss of his life : he runs no greater risk in the latter case than in the former.

Accordingly, at the slightest loss of favor, seeing that no greater misfortune could happen to him, the only resource left him is to throw the state into confusion and conspire against the sovereign.

It is not the same with the grandees of Europe, who, when out of favor, simply lose the good will and countenance of the prince. They withdraw from court, and are satisfied to live a quiet life and enjoy the advantages of their birth. As their lives are seldom in danger except for the crime of high treason, the knowledge that they have thereby little to gain and much to lose is an effectual bar to any attempt in that direction ; as a consequence, there are few rebellions, and few princes die a violent death.

If, with their unlimited power, our princes did not use so many precautions looking to their self-preservation, they would not live a day ; and if they had not in their pay a

multitude of soldiers to tyrannize over the rest of their subjects, their empire would not last a month.

Some four or five centuries ago, a king of France raised guards, contrary to the custom of the times, to protect himself from the assassins a petty prince of Asia had sent to kill him ; till then, the French kings had lived tranquilly among their subjects, like fathers among their children.

Although the kings of France have no power to deprive, of their own motion, a single one of their subjects of life, as our sultans have, yet, on the other hand, they always carry about with them mercy for criminals. It is sufficient for a man to be fortunate enough to see the august features of his prince to become at once worthy of living. These monarchs are like the sun, bringing warmth and life everywhere.

LETTER CIV.

USBK TO THE SAME.

To follow out the train of thought in my last letter, I will tell you in this what a rather sensible European said to me the other day : —

“ The worst course the princes of Asia could adopt is to conceal themselves as they do. Their intention is to excite the veneration of their subjects ; but it is royalty they cause to be venerated and not the sovereign, and whatever attachment they awaken is for the throne, not for its occupant.

“ When the governing power is invisible, it is always the same for the people. Although ten kings, whom it knows only by name, may have had their throats cut one after the other, it does not feel any difference ; it is as if it had been governed by a succession of spirits.

“ If the detestable assassin of our great King Henry IV. had murdered an eastern sovereign, he would have taken

possession of the royal seal and of an immense treasure, apparently amassed for his benefit, and would have tranquilly seized the reins of power, undisturbed by a single protest on behalf of his king, or his king's family and children.

"Astonishment has been expressed at the absence of change in the governments of eastern princes; but is not this due to the hideous tyranny exercised by these governments?

"Changes can be introduced only by the prince or by the people; but there the princes do not care for change, because they have all the power they can have; any change would be to their disadvantage.

"As for the subjects, if any of them should have a certain plan in view, he cannot execute it on the state; to do so, it would be necessary that he should at once introduce some counterpoise for the formidable and unique power already existing; but time is wanting to him as well as means; he has only, however, to march straight to the source of that power, and then he requires only an arm and a moment.

"The murderer mounts the throne; the monarch descends from it, falls, and expires at his feet.

"In Europe a malcontent's hopes of success depend on carrying on a secret correspondence, joining the enemies of his country, seizing on some fortress or exciting vain murmurs among the people; in Asia, he would go directly to the prince, astonish, strike, and overthrow. He would blot out the very memory of his sovereign; and, in an instant, would be slave and master, in an instant, usurper and lawful prince.

"Unhappy the king who has only one head! Upon it would seem to be united all his power solely for the purpose of showing to the first usurper where he shall find that power in its entirety!"

PARIS, 17th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1717.

LETTER CV.

USBK TO THE SAME.

ALL the nations of Europe are not equally submissive to their princes. For example : the impatient temper of the English allows their king little time to strengthen his authority. Submission and obedience are by no means the virtues on which they pride themselves. On this subject they say some very extraordinary things. According to them, gratitude is the only bond of attachment between man and man. A husband, a wife, a father and son, are united only by the love they bear one another, or the services they render one another ; and these different motives of gratitude are the origin of all kingdoms and of all communities.

But if a prince, instead of making his subjects happy, tries to oppress and ruin them, the ground-work of obedience is removed ; no bond or tie attaches them to him, and they recover their natural liberty. They hold that unlimited power cannot be legitimate, because it cannot have a legitimate origin. "For we cannot," they say, "give more power over us to another than we have over ourselves. But we have not unlimited power over ourselves ; we cannot, for instance, take our own life. Nobody on earth, therefore," they conclude, "has such power."

The crime of high treason is, according to them, nothing else than the crime which the weaker commits against the stronger by disobedience, nor does the nature of the disobedience matter. Thus, the English nation, finding that it was the stronger in a contest with one of its kings, declared that it was treason for a prince to make war upon his subjects. The English have good reason, then, for saying that the precept of their Koran enjoining submission to the powers that be, is not very hard to follow, since it is impos-

sible for them not to obey it, inasmuch as they are under an obligation to submit, not to the most virtuous, but to the strongest.

They tell how one of their kings, after he had conquered and taken prisoner a prince who disputed his right to the crown, reproached his rival with his faithlessness and perfidy. "Only a moment ago," retorted the unfortunate prince, "it was decided which of us was the traitor."

A usurper declares those who have not oppressed the country, like him, to be rebels; and, believing there are no laws where he sees no judges, he causes the caprices of chance and fortune to be revered as if they were decrees of heaven.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rebiab 2, 1717.

(5) LETTER CVI. 115

RHEDI TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

You have discoursed much, in one of your letters, of the sciences and arts cultivated in the West. I am afraid you will regard me as a barbarian when I say that the advantage derived from them does not compensate mankind for the ill use to which they are put every day.

I have heard it stated that the invention of bombs has deprived all the nations of Europe of their liberty. Princes no longer able to intrust the defence of their towns to the citizens, who would surrender them at the first bomb, have found this a pretext for keeping large bodies of regular troops, by whose agency they have been enabled to oppress their subjects.

You know that, since the invention of gunpowder, no fortress is impregnable; that is to say, Usbek, that there is no longer upon earth an asylum against injustice and violence.

I am always in terror lest some secret or other should be at length discovered that will not only kill men, but destroy entire tribes and nations.

You have read the historians: give them, then, your serious attention. Almost all monarchies have been founded on an ignorance of the arts, and have perished because they have been cultivated to excess. In the ancient empire of Persia, we have a domestic example.

I have not been a very long time in Europe, yet I have heard a good deal about the ravages of chemistry, and that, too, from sensible people. It would seem to be a fourth plague, destroying men, and destroying them one by one, and yet continually; while war, pestilence, and famine destroy them wholesale, but at intervals.

How have we been benefited by the invention of the compass, and by the discovery of so many nations, who have communicated to us their diseases rather than their wealth? Gold and silver had been established, by a general agreement, as the purchasing medium for all merchandise and a token of their value, because these metals were rare and useless for any other purpose. What did it matter to us, then, that they should become more common, and that, in order to mark the value of a commodity, we must have two or three signs instead of one? This was only more inconvenient.

But, on the other hand, this invention has been the ruin of the countries in which it has been discovered. Entire nations have been destroyed, and those who escaped death were reduced to a slavery so frightful that the recital of it had made Mussulmans shudder.

Happy are the children of Mahomet in their ignorance! Amiable simplicity, so dear to our holy Prophet, thou remindest me always of the innocence of ancient times, and the peace that reigned in the hearts of our first fathers!

VENICE, the 5th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1717.

(4) LETTER CVIL.

(106)

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

EITHER you do not think as you say, or you act better than you think. You left your country for the sake of knowledge, and now you tell me you despise all knowledge; you come to a country where the fine arts are cultivated, and you regard them as pernicious. Shall I tell you my thought, Rhedi? I am in better accord with you than you are with yourself.

Have you well reflected on the barbarous and unfortunate condition into which the loss of the arts would plunge us? It is not necessary to imagine it; it can be seen. There are still communities upon the earth among whom a passably educated monkey might live with honor; he would find himself pretty nearly on a level with the rest of the inhabitants. They would not consider his disposition peculiar, or his character fantastic; he would not be thought at all different from his fellows, except in the possession of a certain degree of elegance to which they were strangers.

You say that the founders of empires have almost all been ignorant of the arts. I do not deny that barbarous races have spread over the earth, rushing like impetuous torrents, and covering with their ferocious armies the most civilized kingdoms. But do not forget this fact: they have then either learned the arts themselves, or made the nations they conquered continue to cultivate them; had they not done so, their power would have passed away like the roar of a thunder-storm.

You fear, say you, the invention of some method of destruction more cruel than any in present use. No; were such a fatal invention to be devised, it would soon be pro-

hibited by the law of nations and crushed out of existence by unanimous consent. To make conquests by such means is not in harmony with the interests of princes: they seek subjects, not lands.

believes in the Nations concept

You complain of the invention of gunpowder and bombs; you are amazed that no fortress should be any longer impregnable; and this means, if it mean anything, that you are amazed because wars are to-day more speedily terminated than they were formerly.

wars are faster

Surely you must have remarked, if you read history, that, since the invention of gunpowder, battles are much less bloody than they were, because there are now hardly any hand-to-hand encounters.

battles less bloody

And why should an art be rejected because in some particular case it is found to be injurious? Do you think, Rhedi, that because the religion brought down from Heaven by our holy Prophet shall one day confound the faithless Christians, it is, therefore, to be rejected?

You believe that the arts debilitate nations and are the cause of the fall of empires. You speak of the destruction of the ancient Persian kingdom, which was the consequence of the effeminacy of its inhabitants; but very far, indeed, is this example from being decisive, for the Greeks, who subdued it, were infinitely more devoted to the cultivation of the arts than they.

The greater value of the Greeks.

When it is affirmed that the arts make men unmanly, the statement can certainly not refer to those who work at them, for they cannot be accused of idleness, which, of all vices, is the most fatal to courage.

Idleness is the worst vice

The allusion, then, must be to those who enjoy the fruits of production. But, as in every civilized country, those able to enjoy the products of one art are obliged to cultivate another, if they do not wish to see themselves reduced to a shameful poverty, it follows that idleness and effeminacy are incompatible with the arts.

Paris is perhaps the most luxurious city in the world, the one in which the various pleasures are brought to the most delicate perfection, and yet, in no other city is life so laborious. In order that one man may live delicately, a hundred must work incessantly. A woman takes it into her head that she must appear at a party in a certain dress ; from that moment, fifty workmen must bid farewell to sleep and give up all thought of eating and drinking. She commands, and she is more promptly obeyed than our monarch would be, for self-interest is the greatest monarch on the earth.

This ardor for labor, this passion for wealth, passes from rank to rank, from the artisan to the nobleman. No one would be poorer than the man immediately below him. You may see a man at Paris who has enough to support him till the day of judgment, yet who toils on unceasingly and runs the risk of shortening his days, to make a livelihood, he will tell you.

The same spirit exists throughout the country ; labor and industry meet the eye everywhere : where, then, is the effeminate people of which you speak so much ?

Let us suppose, Rhedi, a kingdom in which only those arts absolutely necessary for the cultivation of the soil are allowed — and, by the way, these are very numerous — and that all those are banished which subserve the needs of luxury or fancy ; I hold that such a kingdom would be the most wretched in the world.

Though the inhabitants were courageous enough to dispense with so many things that they would yet need badly, the people would gradually perish, and the nation would become so enfeebled that any petty little power could conquer it with ease.

I might enter into long details, and show you that the incomes of individuals would almost cease entirely, and, consequently, those of the prince as well. There would be hardly any exchange of goods among the citizens ; that cir-

ulation of wealth and that extension of incomes, which is the result of the interdependence of the arts, would come to an absolute standstill; each one would live on his land, and would take from it precisely what was needed to prevent him from dying of hunger. But, as that would not be the hundredth part of the revenue of a kingdom, the number of the inhabitants would have to diminish proportionally, and only a hundredth part of them would remain.

Give your careful attention to the amount reached by the revenues of industry. Land produces annually to its owner just the twentieth part of its value; but, with the colors for which he pays a pistole, a painter will make a picture worth fifty. The same may be said of goldsmiths, workers in wool and silk, and of all kinds of artisans.

From all which it may be inferred, Rhedi, that, if a prince is to be powerful, his subjects must live in luxury; and he must labor with as much earnestness to procure them all the superfluities of life, as he should to procure them its necessities.

*Luxury breeds
obedience*

PARIS, the 14th of the moon of Chalval, 1717.

LETTER CVIII.

RICA TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

I HAVE seen the young monarch: his life is very precious in the eyes of his subjects, and not less so in those of Europe, because of the serious calamities his death might produce. But kings are like gods, and, as long as they live, must be thought immortal. His countenance is majestic, but charming withal. A fine education seems in him to harmonize with a happy disposition, and there is already promise of a great prince.

It is said that the character of western kings can never be known until it has been tested by two great trials : the selection of their confessor and of their mistress. We shall soon be witness of the efforts of both to control the mind of this young prince, and may look forward to terrible struggles. For, under a youthful sovereign, these two powers are always rivals ; but, under an old one, they are conciliatory, and form a coalition. Under a young prince, the dervish has a very difficult character to sustain : the strength of the king is in his weakness ; but the mistress triumphs over both his strength and weakness.

When I arrived in France, I found the late king absolutely governed by women. And yet, at his age, one might have imagined that there was no monarch in the world who had less need of them. I heard a woman saying one day : "Something must be done for this young colonel ; his merit is well known to me ; I will speak to the minister." Another remarked : "It is surprising that young abbé should have been forgotten ; he should be a bishop ; he is a man of birth, and I can answer for his morals." You must not imagine, however, that the speakers were favorites of the prince ; they had not, perhaps, addressed a word to him twice in their lives, and European princes are, nevertheless, very easy of access. But, in fact, there is not a single person employed at court, in Paris or the provinces, who has not a woman through whose hands pass all the favors, and sometimes all the wrongs, he can do. These women are all connected together in some way or other, and form a species of republic whose members are always active in the task of mutual aid and succor : it is a sort of state within a state ; and the observer at court, or in Paris and the provinces, who is a witness of the acts of ministers, magistrates, and prelates, if he be not acquainted with the women governing them, is like a man who sees a machine at work, but knows nothing of the springs.

Do you think, Ibben, that a woman takes it into her head to be the mistress of a minister solely in order to sleep with him? What an idea! she does so in order to lay before him five or six petitions every morning; and the natural goodness of the sex is evidenced by the eagerness these women display in helping along a multitude of unfortunate people, whereby they acquire incomes of a hundred thousand livres for themselves.

It is a frequent complaint in Persia that the kingdom is governed by two or three women. It is worse in France, where women universally govern, and not only take possession of all authority wholesale, but afterwards even proceed to retail it among themselves.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Chalval, 1717.

LETTER CIX.

USBEEK TO ———.

THEY have a species of book here with which we are unacquainted in Persia, but which would seem to be very fashionable in France; it is the journal. Idleness feels itself flattered by its perusal. It is enchanting to be able to run through thirty volumes in a quarter of an hour.

In most books the author has hardly paid the usual compliments before he has his readers in confusion. He plunges them, in an almost lifeless condition, into a subject submerged under a sea of words. One writer would immortalize himself by a duodecimo; another, by a quarto; another, with vaster ambitions, by a folio. He must, therefore, extend his subject in proportion, — and this he does pitilessly, reckoning his unfortunate reader's trouble as nothing, who kills himself in the effort to reduce what the author has taken such pains to amplify.

I cannot see, ———, what merit there is in such works. I could make as good ones myself if I wanted to ruin my health and a publisher.

The great error of journalists is to speak only of new books ; as if truth were ever new ! It seems to me that, until a man has read all the old books, there is no reason why he should prefer the new.

But, when they established a law for themselves that they must never speak of any works except those hot from the press, they also established another which is very tiresome. They do not, for some reason or other, care to criticise the books from which they make extracts ; and, in fact, where is the man so daring as to risk the creation of ten or twelve enemies every month ?

Most authors resemble poets, who will take a caning with equanimity, but who, though uninterested in their shoulders, are so jealous of their works that they cannot bear the slightest criticism of them. It is, therefore, very necessary to be careful not to attack them in a spot so sensitive, and the journalists know this well, consequently they begin with a laudation of the subject treated. This is the first sign of their stupidity. Then, they praise the author, and any one can see the praise is forced ; and yet they have to do with people who are always on the watch, always ready to insist on a large measure of justice for themselves, and always ready to annihilate an over-bold journalist with pen-thrusts.

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Zilcade, 1718.

LETTER CX.

RICA TO ———.

THE University of Paris is the eldest daughter of the kings of France, and very "eldest" she may be styled, for she is

more than nine hundred years old ; accordingly, she dotes now and then.

I have been told that, some time ago, she had a terrible quarrel with certain doctors anent the letter Q,¹ which she would have pronounced "K." The dispute became so warm that some had their property taken from them in consequence. It required the intervention of the Parliament to terminate the quarrel, which it did by a solemn decree granting permission to all subjects of the king of France to pronounce this letter as their fancy dictated. It was a glorious spectacle, that of the two most illustrious bodies in Europe occupied in deciding the fate of a letter of the alphabet.

It would seem, my dear ———, as if the heads of the greatest men grow narrow when they are brought together, and that where wise men most do congregate, there you have least wisdom. Great bodies are always so absorbed in petty details, vain usages, and forms, that the essentials have often to go to the rear.

I have heard that a king of Aragon,² having assembled the States of Aragon and Catalonia, the first sessions were employed in deciding as to the language in which the proceedings were to be conducted. The dispute was lively, and the States would have broken up a thousand times, if an expedient had not been devised. This lucky expedient was that the question should be put in Catalan and the answer in Aragonese.

PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Zilhage, 1717.

LETTER CXI.

RICA TO ———.

THE role of a pretty woman is much more serious than you would fancy. Nothing could be of graver consequence than

¹ He means the quarrel of Ramus.

² It was in 1610.

what takes place at her toilet every morning among her servants. The general of an army does not give more attention to the disposition of his right or of his reserves than she to the arrangement of a patch, which may miss fire, but from which she hopes or predicts a conquest.

What mental anxiety and care is incessantly required to reconcile the interests of two rivals, in order to appear neutral towards both, while she has surrendered to each, and act as mediatrix on all the subjects of complaint, of which she is really the cause !

And then, what an engrossing occupation it is to arrange party after party, to be responsible for their success and revival, and to anticipate all the accidents that might cause their failure !

Nor are these the most serious troubles ; the greatest of all is, not to be amused, but to appear to be so. Bore the ladies as much as you choose, they will pardon you, provided you can make them believe you think they are enjoying themselves.

Some days ago, I was at a supper given by certain ladies in the country. On the way they never stopped saying, " At least, we are sure of plenty of amusement, and we shall all be very gay."

We were rather badly assorted, and consequently rather slow. " We are having quite a pleasant time, are we not ? " said one of the women. " I am quite sure there is not a party in Paris so merry as ours is to-day." As I was beginning to be utterly wearied by the whole thing, a woman shook me, and said : " Well, is not this delightful ? "—" Yes," I answered with a yawn, " I am ready to die with laughing." But all our efforts could not make head against our dulness ; as for myself, I felt myself falling from yawn to yawn into a drowsy condition that ended all my pleasure.

PARIS, the 11th of the moon of Maharram, 1717.



• • • • •



LETTER CXII.

USBK TO —.

THE reign of the late king was so long that its end had made the beginning forgotten. It has now, however, become the fashion to be interested in the events that occurred during his minority, and the memoirs of those times are being eagerly devoured.

I send you a discourse which one of the Paris generals pronounced in a council of war; I confess I cannot make much of it.

“Messieurs, although our troops have been repulsed with loss, I think it will be easy for us to repair this check. I have six couplets ready for publication which, I am assured, will restore the balance. I have selected some wonderfully clear voices which, issuing from the cavity of certain very powerful chests, will have a marvellous effect upon the people. These couplets are set to an air that has heretofore created much enthusiasm.

“If this does not succeed, we intend bringing out a print representing the hanging of Mazarin.

“Fortunately for us, he does not speak French well, and his mispronunciation is of such an absurd character that his fortunes must decline.

“We are constantly pointing out the ridiculous nature of it to the people. We discovered him committing a grammatical mistake, a few days ago, of such a ludicrous character that it has thrown all the streets into convulsions.

“I expect that before eight days the people will make the name Mazarin a generic epithet for all beasts of burden and all beasts of draught.

“Since our defeat, our songs about original sin have stung him so terribly that, from the dread of seeing his partisans reduced to half, he has dismissed all his pages.

"Rouse yourselves then ; take courage, and be sure that we shall before long hiss him across the mountains back into his own country."

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXIII.

RHEDI TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

I AM reading during, my residence in Europe, the ancient and modern historians, and comparing the different ages. I feel a certain pleasure in seeing them pass in review before me, and my attention is especially arrested by those great changes which have rendered century so different from century, and the earth so unlike herself.

You may have had your attention, perhaps, attracted to a circumstance that causes me fresh surprise every day. How is it that the world is so little populated to-day, in comparison with what it was formerly? How is it that nature has lost the marvellous fecundity she possessed in earlier ages? Is it that she has already attained old age and is now on the verge of decline?

I have been for more than a year in Italy, where I have seen only the remains of that ancient Italy so famous of yore. Although all the natives live in towns, yet are these towns almost deserted and uninhabited. It would seem as if they still existed only to mark the sites of those powerful cities of which history has so much spoken. There are people who claim that the single city of Rome formerly contained more inhabitants than the largest kingdom of Europe has to-day. It was no uncommon circumstance for a Roman citizen to have ten and even thirty thousand slaves, not reckoning those who worked in his country houses ; and

as the number of citizens is supposed to have amounted to four or five hundred thousand, to attempt to fix the number of inhabitants would astound the imagination.

Sicily formerly possessed powerful kingdoms and numerous nations, which have since disappeared ; it has now nothing worthy of consideration except its volcanoes.

Greece is so deserted that it does not contain the hundredth part of its former inhabitants.

In Spain, once so populous, we see to-day only deserted plains ; and France bears no comparison in this respect with that ancient Gaul of which Cæsar speaks.

The countries of the north are thinned ; the people there are very far from the time when, on account of their excess of members, they were obliged to send forth tribes and colonies and entire nations to seek for new homes.

Poland and Turkey in Europe have almost no inhabitants.

In America, the two hundredth part of the men who formed such great empires on that continent can no longer be found there.

Asia is but little better off in this respect. That famous Asia Minor, which held within its bosom so many potent realms and so prodigious a number of great cities, has now but two or three of either. As for greater Asia, the portion of it subject to the Turks is not better supplied ; and if we contrast the present state of the part which our kings control with its flourishing condition formerly, we shall see that it contains but a very small proportion of the countless numbers that owned the authority of Xerxes and Darius.

As for the little states around these great empires, they are really deserts : such are the kingdoms of Irimetta, Circassia, and Guriel. Their princes, although their realms are wide, have hardly fifty thousand subjects.

What has been stated with regard to other countries can also be said of Egypt.

In fine, I travel through the whole earth, and find on its

surface nothing but decay : it presents the aspect of a planet ravaged by pestilence and famine.

Africa has always been an unknown continent, and cannot be described with the same exactness as the other parts of the world. But the coasts of the Mediterranean have been well known in all ages, and their condition affords sufficient evidence of how greatly it has fallen away since the time when it was a Roman province. To-day, its princes are of less account than those of any part of the world.

After making a calculation as precise as can be attempted with reference to a subject of this nature, I have come to the conclusion that the earth has not now the fiftieth part of the population it had in the time of Cæsar. The most surprising phase of the question is that it is becoming less and less populous every day, and if this continues, in ten centuries it will be a desert.

And now, my dear Usbek, you have before your eyes the most terrible catastrophe that has ever happened in the world ; but it has scarcely received any attention, because it has happened imperceptibly and in the course of a great number of ages ; now, this must be the symptom of an internal disease, a secret and hidden poison, a malady of decay which is scourging human nature.

VENICE, the 10th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1718.

LETTER CXIV.

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

THE world, my dear Rhedi, is not incorruptible ; not even the heavens are, for that matter : astronomers are ocular witnesses of all the changes that are the very natural effects of the universal movement of matter.

The earth, like the other planets, is subject to the same laws of motion; she has to endure a perpetual internal struggle among her elements: sea and continent appear to be engaged in everlasting war; every instant produces new combinations.

The abode of men being so liable to changes, their condition must be equally uncertain: a hundred thousand causes may be in action, the most insignificant of which can destroy them, and, with stronger reason, increase or diminish their number.

I will not speak of those particular catastrophes, so common among historians, which have overwhelmed cities and entire kingdoms: there have been general ones also, which have often brought the human race within an inch of annihilation.

History is full of those universal plagues, which have in turn desolated the universe. They tell of one, among many others, so violent in its nature that it burned up the roots of plants, and its effects spread through the known world, even to the Empire of Cathay; had it attained one degree more of corruption, all human nature would, perhaps, have perished in a single day.

Not two centuries ago, the most shameful of all diseases reached Europe, Asia and Africa; in a short time, it produced prodigious effects: had its progress continued with the same fury, the human race would have been swept away.

Consumed by diseases from their birth, incapable of supporting the burden of social obligations, they would have miserably perished.

What would have been the result, if the poison had been a little more virulent?— and it would have doubtless become so if a remedy had not fortunately been discovered more powerful than the disease. Perhaps this malady, attacking the organs of generation, would, at last, have attacked generation itself.

But why speak of the destruction which might have happened to the human race? Has it not happened in reality, and did not the Deluge reduce mankind to a single family?

Can those who are acquainted with nature, and have a reasonable idea of God, comprehend that matter and all created things have existed only six thousand years; that God has postponed His works during all eternity and used His creative power only yesterday? Was it because He was not able, or because He was not willing? But, if He was not able at one time, He could not be able at another. It is, then, because He was not willing. But, as there is in God no order of succession, if it is admitted that He has willed anything once, He has willed it always, and from the beginning.

We need not, then, calculate the years of the world's existence; as well attempt to calculate the number of the sands at the bottom of the sea.

However, all historians speak of a first father; they show us human nature at its birth. Is it not reasonable to think that Adam was saved from a common misfortune, as Noah was in the Deluge, and that these great events have been frequent on the earth, since the creation of the universe?

But all destruction is not of a violent character. We see several parts of the earth grow weary of furnishing subsistence to men; how do we know that the entire earth is not affected by universal causes of lassitude, — causes that are slow and imperceptible?

I have been very glad to give you these general ideas before answering in more detail your letter on the depopulation that has been occurring during the last seventeen and eighteen centuries. In my next letter, I will prove to you that moral causes independent of physical ones have produced this effect.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXV.

USBK TO THE SAME.

You ask why the earth is less populous now than it was formerly ; if you pay close attention, you will be able to see that the cause of this difference is purely moral.

Ever since the Christian and Mahometan religions have shared the Roman world between them, there has been a marvellous change. These two religions are far from being as favorable to the propagation of the species as was that of the masters of the universe.

By the latter polygamy was forbidden, and in this it had a very great advantage over the Mahometan religion ; but divorce was permitted, and in this it had an equally great advantage over the Christian religion. I find nothing so contradictory as that plurality of wives allowed by the sacred Koran, and the order to satisfy them commanded by the same book. " Visit your wives," says the Prophet, " because you are as necessary to them as their garments, and they are as necessary to you as your garments." Now this is a precept which renders the life of a Mussulman very laborious. Must not the man who has the four wives ordained by the law, even if he have only the same number of concubines and slaves in addition, be in rather a crushed condition under the weight of so many garments ?

" Your wives are your plough-lands," says the Prophet, a second time ; " approach, therefore, your plough-lands ; do good for your souls' sake ; and it shall be one day returned to you."

I regard a good Mussulman as an athlete destined to combat without any interval of relaxation, but who, becoming enfeebled and prostrated by his first toils, soon droops on the very field of victory, and finds himself buried, so to speak, under his own triumphs.

Nature always acts slowly, and if I may so express myself, thriftily. Her operations are never violent ; even in her own productions she wishes temperance ; she always acts by rule and measure ; if she is hurried, she soon falls into a decline ; she employs all her remaining strength in self-preservation, losing absolutely her productive virtue and generative power.

To this state of debility we are always reduced by the excessive number of our wives ; they exhaust rather than satisfy us. It is very common to see a man in a crowded seraglio with very few children, and these children are, for the most part, weak and unhealthy, and inherit the lassitude of their fathers.

Nor is this all. These women, fated to a life of enforced continence, must be guarded, and their guardians must be eunuchs ; religion, jealousy, and even reason, do not permit any others to approach them. These guardians must be numerous, in order to maintain tranquillity within among women who are incessantly quarrelling, or to prevent any attempts from the outside. Thus a man who has ten wives or concubines requires at least that number of eunuchs to guard them. But what a loss to society is such a number of men, dead, you might say, from their birth ! What an effect must it not have on the increase of population !

Then the female slaves who, together with the eunuchs, are the attendants on all these women, continue unwilling virgins until old age overtakes them. They cannot marry while in the seraglio, and their mistresses, having become accustomed to them, never consent to release them.

And now you see how one single man can monopolize the services of so many agents of both sexes for his pleasure, can render them utterly unprofitable for the state and useless for the propagation of the species.

Constantinople and Ispahan are the capitals of the two greatest empires in the world, and should be each the centre

of all its interests and the point to which all its inhabitants should be drawn by a multitude of attractions. Yet these cities are perishing, the instruments of their own destruction, and would soon fall into ruins did not their sovereigns, almost during every century, force whole nations to come thither and repeople them. I shall conclude in another letter.

PARIS, the 13th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXVI.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE Romans had not fewer slaves than we, they had more ; but they made a better use of them.

Far from preventing the multiplication of their slaves by violent methods, they favored it, on the contrary, by all the means in their power. They united them, as much as they could, by a kind of marriage. In this way they filled their houses with domestics of both sexes and of all ages, and the state with an innumerable population.

Children, who were to constitute the wealth of their master, sprang into existence in crowds around him ; he, alone, reared and trained them. Their fathers, freed from the burden of their support, followed the propensities of nature, and multiplied, without fear of a too numerous family.

I have said that, among us, all our slaves are occupied solely with the guardianship of our wives, and that they are, as far as the state is concerned, in a perpetual lethargy, so that the cultivation of the arts and of the soil is restricted to a few freemen, to the heads of a few families, who devote themselves as little to this pursuit as they possibly can.

It was not so in the case of the Romans. The republic utilized this horde of slaves, and did so to its infinite advan-

tage. Each of them had his own private property or *peculium*, which he held on terms imposed by his master. This *peculium* he utilized in whatever direction his inclinations tended. One became a banker, another dealt in cargoes ; one sold goods by retail, another gained employment as an artisan, or tilled a farm ; but every one of them used all his energy to increase his *peculium*, which obtained for him comfort in his present slavery and the prospect of future liberty. This created an industrious people, and gave life to art and industry.

When thrift and toil had made the slaves rich they purchased their freedom and became citizens. The republic was incessantly repairing its losses, and receiving new families into its bosom according as the old ones faded away.

I shall, perhaps, find an opportunity in my next letters of proving that the more men there are in a state the more commerce flourishes. I will also prove, and with quite as much ease, that the more commerce flourishes the more the number of the population increases, as these two things are of necessity reciprocally helpful and advantageous.

This being the case, what must have been the growth and increase of that enormous population of industrious and tireless slaves ! Industry and plenty gave them birth ; and they, in their turn, gave birth to industry and plenty.

LETTER CXVII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

WE have heretofore spoken of Mahometan countries, and have sought the reason why they are less populous than were those under the government of the Romans. Let us now examine the causes of the same effect among Christians.

Divorce was permitted by the pagan religion and forbidden by the Christian. This change, which at first appeared of

little consequence, had gradually results so terrible that they would seem almost incredible.

Not only was all the sweetness of the marriage tie destroyed, but its grand aim was also attacked ; the bonds, intended to be drawn closer, were loosened, and, instead of hearts being united, as was claimed to be the object of the prohibition, they were sundered forever.

Into an act so free, an act in which the heart ought so largely to participate, were introduced weariness, necessity, and the fatality of destiny itself. Disgust, caprice, and incompatibility of temper were accounted of no importance ; the heart, the most variable and inconstant object in nature, was to be fixed ; persons utterly tired of each other, and almost always badly matched, must be yoked in a thralldom from which there never was to be relief or escape, resembling the living human beings which certain tyrants used to bind to dead bodies.

Nothing contributed more to mutual affection than the facility of divorce : a husband and a wife were induced to support domestic trials patiently, knowing that they could end them when they wished ; and the knowledge that they were free to use this power often kept them from doing so during their whole lives.

But in the case of Christians, their present trials render them desperate with regard to the future : all they can see in the annoyances incidental to the marriage state is their duration, and, so to speak, their eternity ; hence mutual disgust, discord, and contempt ; and this is so much lost for posterity. They have been scarcely three years united when the essential object of their union is neglected ; then come thirty years of coldness ; then private separations, as lasting as if they were public, and perhaps even more pernicious than if they were. They confine themselves to their own apartments, and, of course, all this works to the prejudice of future races. A man soon becomes disgusted

with one everlasting woman, and frequents the company of courtesans : a commerce fraught with shame, and detrimental to the interests of society, for it represents the pleasures of marriage without fulfilling its object.

If one of the two persons thus united be unfit to carry out the designs of nature and the propagation of the species, either on account of temperament or old age, such a person renders his or her companion equally unfortunate and equally useless.

It is not surprising, then, that so many marriages among Christians should result in so few children. Divorce is abolished : for badly assorted marriages there is no remedy ; women no longer, as in the times of the Romans, pass from the hand of husband to husband, who all used to turn them to the best possible account on the way.

I venture to assert that if, in a republic like Lacedæmon, which harassed its citizens continually with strange and subtle laws, and permitted the existence of only one family, namely, the state, there had been established a regulation compelling husbands to exchange wives every year, an innumerable population would have been the result.

It is rather hard to understand the reason which led Christians to abolish divorcè. Marriage among all nations is susceptible of any number of arbitrary customs, and it is a duty to banish such of these as tend to weaken its object ; but Christians do not regard it from this point of view ; accordingly, they have a good deal of trouble in telling what it really is. They do not make it consist in sensual pleasure ; on the contrary, as I have mentioned already, they would seem to desire to banish sensual pleasure from it as much as they can ; in their eyes, it is an image, a figure, and something mysterious which I do not comprehend.

PARIS, the 19th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXVIII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE prohibition of divorce is not the only cause of the depopulation of Christian countries ; the great number of eunuchs they have amongst them is not a less considerable one.

I speak of the priests and the dervishes of both sexes, who are devoted to perpetual chastity : this is pre-eminently the virtue of Christians ; I do not understand it, as I am utterly at a loss to know what kind of a virtue that virtue must be which produces no result.

The statements of their doctors on this question appear to me to involve a manifest contradiction : they say that marriage is holy, and that celibacy, which is its opposite, is holier still, never taking into account the fundamental dogma and principle that the good is always the best.

The number of people who make profession of celibacy is prodigious. Formerly, fathers condemned their children to it from the cradle ; to-day they do not do so until they have reached the age of eighteen, which is pretty much the same thing.

This traffic in continence has destroyed more human beings than pestilences or the most sanguinary wars.

Every religious house contains an un-ending family, in which nobody is born, and which is maintained at the expense of all the others. These houses are always open, like so many gulfs in which future races are to be buried.

Such a policy is very different from that of the Romans, who established penal laws against all who rejected marriage and decided to enjoy a liberty detrimental to the public utility.

I am here speaking of Catholic countries only. The Protestant religion allows every one to beget children : it

does not suffer either priests or dervishes ; and if, at the time of the creation of this religion, which claimed to refer everything to the first ages, its founders had not been incessantly accused of unchastity, we cannot doubt that, after rendering the practice of marriage universal, they would have still further lightened its yolk, and in the end removed all the barriers which, on the point of marriage, separate the Nazarene from Mahomet.

However this may be, it is quite certain that religion gives the Protestants an infinite advantage over the Catholics.

It is my firm belief that, if the present condition of Europe lasts, the Catholic religion cannot exist for five hundred years longer.

Before the decline of Spanish power, the Catholics were much stronger than the Protestants. The latter have gradually reached a position of equality, and to-day the balance leans to the other side. This superiority must increase, the Protestants becoming richer and more powerful and the Catholics weaker.

Protestant countries ought to be, and are really, more populous than Catholic countries. From this it follows, in the first place, that the revenues of the former are more considerable, because they increase in proportion to the number who pay ; secondly, that the lands are better cultivated ; and, lastly, that commerce is more prosperous, as there are more people who have a fortune to make, as well as more needs to be supplied and more resources to supply them. When the number of the inhabitants of a country is barely sufficient to till the soil, trade must perish, and when it is barely sufficient for carrying on trade, tillage must be ruined ; that is to say, both must fall at the same time, because he who devotes himself to the one does so at the expense of the other.

As for Catholic countries, not only is agriculture abandoned, but industry itself is harmful ; it only consists in learning five or six words of a dead language. As soon as a

man has made this provision for himself, he need have no further concern about his future ; he finds in the cloister a tranquil existence, which only immense exertion and labor would give him in the world.

Nor is this all : the dervishes have in their hands almost the entire wealth of the state ; they form a community of grasping persons, who are always taking and never returning ; they are continually accumulating revenue in order to acquire capital. So much riches produce, so to speak, palsy, and there is no longer either circulation or commerce, arts or manufactures.

There is no Protestant prince in Europe who does not levy on his subjects ten times the amount of taxes that the Pope does on his ; yet the latter are wretched, while the former live in affluence. Commerce gives life to the one ; monarchism, death to the other.

PARIS, the 16th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXIX.

USBEEK TO THE SAME.

WE have done with Asia and Europe ; let us now pass to Africa.

We can speak only of its coasts, for the interior is unknown.

The Barbary coast is not so populous as in the time of the Romans, for reasons we have already shown. As for the coast of Guinea, it must have been fearfully depopulated during the last two hundred years, as its petty kings and village chiefs have been engaged in selling their subjects to European princes for transportation to the American colonies.

A circumstance worth noting is that this same America, which is every year receiving new inhabitants, does not profit

by the continual drain on Africa. The slaves, conveyed to another climate, perish there by thousands; and the labors of the mines, in which both the natives of the country and foreigners are constantly employed, the poisonous exhalations arising from them, and the quicksilver, which must of necessity be continually used, all conspire to render their destruction unavoidable.

Nothing more outrageous can be conceived than this slaughter of countless numbers for the purpose of drawing gold and silver from the bowels of the earth, metals in themselves absolutely useless, and constituting wealth solely because they have been selected as its symbols.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXX.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE fecundity of a people sometimes depends upon the most trivial circumstances imaginable, so that often all that is necessary to render it more numerous than it was before is to give a new turn to its impressions.

The Jews, always exterminated and always springing to life again, have repaired their losses and their desolation by this one hope, in which every family indulges, that amongst them shall be born a powerful king who will rule the whole world.

The immense population subject to the ancient kings of Persia owed its existence to the Magian dogma that the acts most agreeable to God are the begetting of a child, the tilling of a field, and the planting of a tree.

If China holds in her bosom such prodigious multitudes, it is because her people retain a certain notion peculiar to themselves: the children regard their fathers as gods,

whom they reverence as such during this life, and honor with sacrifices after their death, believing that, through these sacrifices, their souls, absorbed in the Tyen, recover a new life ; consequently, every one finds it his interest to increase a family which will be so submissive to him in this world and so necessary when he is in the next.

On the other hand, Mahometan countries are becoming every day more deserted, on account of an opinion which, though holy in itself, has fatal results when it is deeply rooted in minds. We regard ourselves as travellers who ought to be always thinking of another home ; works of utility and duration, concern about the future of our children, plans that look beyond our short and fleeting lives, appear to us as something extravagant. Tranquil as to the present, untroubled as to the future, we neither care to repair our public buildings, nor to reclaim our waste lands, nor to cultivate those that are capable of tillage ; we pass our time in a state of utter indifference, and allow Providence to do everything.

A spirit of vanity has impelled Europeans to establish the unjust law of primogeniture, a law unfavorable to propagation, inasmuch as it rivets the attention of a father upon a single one of his children to the exclusion of the others, and obliges him, in order to assure the fortunes of one, to disregard the claims of the rest ; finally, because it destroys that equality among citizens which constitutes the real wealth of a nation.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

LETTER CXXI.

USBEC TO THE SAME.

COUNTRIES inhabited by savages are ordinarily thinly peopled, because of the repugnance they have almost always for labor and agriculture. This unfortunate aversion is so

strong that, when they utter any imprecation against one of their enemies, the worst fate they can wish him is that he may be reduced so low as to plough a field, believing that hunting and fishing are the only pursuits befitting their dignity.

But as there are often years when hunting and fishing give but a poor return, famines are frequent and widespread; apart from the fact that fish and game can never be in such plenty as to support a numerous population long, because animals always desert those countries in which the inhabitants increase in number.

Moreover, the villages of savages, usually consisting of two or three hundred persons, being isolated from each other, with interests as antagonistic as those of two empires, cannot be mutually helpful, because they have not the resource of great states, in which all the parts have a natural connection and are reciprocally beneficial.

There is among savages another custom not less pernicious than the first; it is the cruel practice of abortion to which their women are addicted, in order that pregnancy may not render them distasteful to their husbands.

In this city the laws enacted against this crime are terribly harsh; in fact, excessive in their severity. Every unmarried woman who has not declared her pregnancy before a magistrate is punished with death if her offspring dies. Shame and the sense of her dishonor, even accidents, are not accepted in extenuation.

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

LETTER CXXII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE ordinary effect of colonies is to weaken the countries from which they are drawn, without increasing the population of those to which they are sent.

Men ought to remain where they are. Diseases result from changing a good climate for a bad one ; others arise from the circumstance that there has been any change at all.

The air, like the plants, of every country is charged with particles of its soil. The stability of our constitution is the result of its action on it. When we are transported into another country, we become ill. The fluids being accustomed to a certain degree of consistency, the solids to a certain disposition of their parts, and to a certain degree of motion, they cannot tolerate any addition, and resist any alteration.

When a country is uninhabited, this is proof positive of some particular defect in the climate ; consequently, when men are taken from a healthy atmosphere and sent to such a country, the issue is the exact contrary of what was intended.

The Romans knew this by experience. They banished all their criminals to Sardinia, and packed off the Jews there too. ~~They had soon to seek consolation for the bereave-~~ment that ensued ; their contempt for these poor creatures rendered this an easy task.

The great Shah Abbas, anxious to deprive the Turks of the means of raising great armies on his frontiers, transported almost all the Armenians from their own country, and sent more than twenty thousand families into the province of Guilan, who nearly all perished in a very short time.

None of the settlements that have been made in Constantinople have ever succeeded.

The prodigious number of negroes, of which we spoke already, has not filled America.

Since the destruction of the Jews under Adrian, Palestine has been without inhabitants.

It must therefore be confessed that great depopulations are irreparable, because a people that falls to a certain point remains in that condition, and, if it ever does repair its losses, it will take centuries to do so.

If, however, when it is in a state of decline, the most insignificant of the circumstances we have detailed co-operates ; then, not only does it not repair its losses, but it sinks more and more every day, and its annihilation is only a question of time.

The results of the expulsion of the Moors from Spain are as patent to-day as when it first occurred ; so far is the void from being filled that it is becoming ever larger.

Since the devastation of America, the Spaniards, who have taken the place of the ancient inhabitants, have failed to repopulate it ; on the contrary, by a fatality which I should prefer calling an act of divine justice, the destroyers are destroying and consuming themselves every day.

Princes ought, therefore, to abandon the design of colonizing great countries. I do not say that they may not sometimes succeed. There are climates so excellent that the human race will always multiply in them : witness those islands¹ that have been peopled by some sick persons who were left behind by vessels on the coast, and who recovered their health immediately after.

But, even if these colonies succeeded, they would divide, instead of augmenting, the power that planted them, unless they were of very small extent, like those dispatched to occupy some post for trading purposes.

The Carthaginians had, like the Spaniards, discovered America, or at least some great islands with which they carried on an enormous traffic ; but when they saw the number of their citizens decreasing, that wise republic forbade them to continue the traffic or to sail thither in future.

It is my positive belief that, instead of sending Spaniards to the Indies, the Indians and all the half-breeds should be shipped to Spain, and all its scattered subjects should be restored to this monarchy ; then, if Spain retained only the half of her great colonies, she would still become the most formidable power in Europe.

¹ The author means the Isle of Bourbon perhaps.

Empires may be compared to a tree whose branches, when too much extended, deprive the trunk of its sap, and only shade it in return.

The example of the Portuguese and Spaniards ought to be enough of itself to moderate the rage of princes for conquering far-off lands.

These two nations, having subdued, with inconceivable rapidity, immense realms, and, being more astonished at their victory than the vanquished nations were at their defeat, considered the best methods of preserving their conquests, and each took a different course.

The Spaniards, despairing of making the conquered nations loyal, determined to extirpate them and send from Spain people on whom they could rely to take their place. Never was more horrible design more punctually executed. The spectacle was presented of a people as numerous as all the inhabitants of Europe, disappearing from the earth on the arrival of those barbarians, who seemed, when discovering the Indies, to have discovered at the same time what were the utmost limits to which cruelty might be extended.

Their barbarity enabled them to preserve this country under their dominion. Judge from this how fatal conquests are, since their effects are so much so : for this was the only remedy they could have adopted. How could they otherwise have retained so many millions in subjection? How could they have successfully managed a civil war at such a distance? What would have become of them, if they had given these people time to recover from their astonishment at the arrival of these new gods and from the terror of their thunderbolts?

As for the Portuguese, they adopted a different method ; they did not act with cruelty, and so they were soon expelled from all the countries they had discovered. The Dutch favored the rebellion of these nations and profited by it.

What prince would envy the lot of these conquerors?

Who would wish conquests on such conditions? Some were banished from theirs; others turned theirs into deserts, and did the same to their own country.

It is the destiny of heroes to ruin themselves, either by conquering countries which they suddenly lose, or subduing nations which they are themselves obliged to destroy; like that madman who spent his substance in purchasing statues which he threw into the sea, and glasses which he broke immediately afterwards.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Rhamann, 1718.

LETTER CXXIII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE mildness of a government contributes marvellously to the propagation of the species. Republics are a constant proof of this fact, and especially Holland and Switzerland, which are the worst countries in Europe, if we consider the nature of their soil, and yet are the most populous. Nothing attracts strangers more than liberty, and the wealth that follows it always; the one is sought for its own sake, and the lack of the other urges men in the direction where it may be found.

The human species multiplies in a country in which children can have abundance of food without diminishing the supply of the parents.

That very equality among citizens, which is ordinarily the source of equality in their fortunes, sends plenty and vigor through all the members of the body politic, and spreads them in every direction.

It is not the same with countries subject to arbitrary power: the prince, his courtiers, and some private individuals possess the entire wealth of the country, while all the rest groan in extreme misery.

If a man is badly off, and feels that, should he have children, they must be poorer than himself, he will not marry; or, if he marry, he will fear to have too many children, who would add to the embarrassment of his property and sink to a lower condition than that of their father.

Of course, the rustic or peasant, being once married, will increase the population, without considering whether he may be rich or poor; such a consideration does not affect him. He has always a heritage to bequeath to his children: his plough; and nothing will ever prevent him from following blindly the instincts of nature.

But what service can the state derive from children who waste away in misery? They perish almost as soon as they are born; there is no chance of their growing up vigorously. They die off in detail in a thousand different ways, when they are not carried off wholesale by those frequent epidemics which misery and a poor diet are always originating; the survivors reach the age of manhood without acquiring its strength, and are feeble and languid during the remainder of their lives.

Men are like plants, which never thrive if they are not well cultivated. Among people who live in misery, the race decays, and sometimes degenerates entirely.

France can furnish strong evidence of this truth. During the late wars, a number of youths, under the stress of their dread that they would be forced to serve in the militia, were induced to marry at far too tender an age and in a condition of great poverty. Many children were born of these marriages; but it would be vain to search for them in France: poverty, famine, and disease have hurried them out of existence.

Now, if it be possible to observe such things in a kingdom having such an admirable climate and such a well-regulated government as France possesses, what must be the condition of other states?

PARIS, the 23d of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

LETTER CXXIV.

USBEK TO THE MOLLAH, MEHEMET ALL,

GUARDIAN OF THE THREE TOMBS, AT KOUM.

WHAT avail the fasts of the imaums and the hair-shirts of the mollahs? Twice hath the hand of God rested heavily on the children of the law, twice hath the sun enwrapped himself in clouds and deigned to shed his rays on their defeats alone; their armies have gathered together and been scattered like the dust.

The empire of the Osmanlis has been shaken by the two greatest disasters it has ever encountered: a Christian mufti supports it with difficulty; the grand vizir of Germany is the scourge of God, sent to chastise the followers of Omar. He bears with him in every direction the wrath of Heaven, aroused by their rebellion and perfidy.

Sacred spirit of the imaums, thou weepest night and day over the children of the Prophet whom the detestable Omar hath led astray; thy bowels yearn at the spectacle of their misfortunes; thou dost wish their salvation and not their destruction; thou wouldst see them once more united under the standard of Ali by the tears of the saints, and not scattered through mountains and deserts by the terror of the infidels.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXV.

USBEK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

WHAT can be the motive of the unlimited generosity which princes show to courtiers? Is it to win their attachment?

But they have already done so, as far as this is possible. And besides, if they gain some of their subjects by purchasing them, they lose an infinitely larger number by impoverishing them.

When I think of the condition of princes, ever surrounded by greedy and insatiable men, I cannot suppress a sensation of pity ; and I pity them the more when they have not the strength to resist solicitations which those who never need to solicit anything find it so hard to reject.

I never hear their liberalities, favors, and pensions discussed without a thousand reflections occurring to my mind ; ideas crowd upon one another ; and in fancy I am listening to the words of the following ordinance : —

“ The indefatigable courage wherewith certain of our subjects demand pensions having unceasingly taxed our royal magnificence, we have at length yielded to the multitude of petitions which they have presented to us, and which have until now constituted the chief anxiety of the throne. These suitors have represented to us that they have not failed since our accession to the crown to be present at our levées on every occasion, that we have always seen them on our passage as motionless as posts, and that, in order to gaze upon Our Serenity, they have raised themselves on the shoulders of the tallest people. We have also received several petitions from persons of the fair sex, supplicating us to take notice of the strictness of their morals ; also from some antiquated dames who, with trembling heads, remind us that they have been the ornaments of the kings our predecessors, and that if the generals of the said kings’ armies have rendered the state formidable by their prowess, they have rendered the court not less celebrated by their intrigues. Wherefore, desiring to treat these suppliants with kindness, and to grant their prayer, we do ordain as follows : —

“ That every laborer having five children shall cut off daily the fifth part of the bread which he gives them. We enjoin

fathers of families to arrange this retrenchment in the fairest manner they possibly can.

“ We expressly forbid all those who cultivate their estates, or who have let them as farms, to make any improvement thereon, in any manner whatever.

“ We ordain that all persons engaged in base and mechanical employments, who have never been at the levée of Our Majesty, shall henceforth never buy clothing for their wives and children except once every four years. We interdict also, under the severest penalties, those little merrymakings which they have been accustomed to hold in their families on the principal festivals of the year.

“ And, inasmuch as we have been informed that most of the burghers of our good towns have been entirely engrossed in the business of establishing their daughters, whose only claim to regard in our state is based on a depressing and tiresome modesty, we ordain that said burghers shall adjourn the marriage of said daughters until the latter have reached the age fixed by the ordinances, and may legally constrain them thereto. We forbid our magistrates to provide for the education of their children.”

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXVI.

RICA TO —.

THE adherents of every religion experience considerable embarrassment when they are asked to give an idea of the pleasures in a future life destined for those who have lived well. It is easy enough to terrify the wicked by a description of the torments that menace them ; but it is apparently found impossible to know what to promise to the virtuous. It seems to belong to the very nature of pleasures to be of

short duration ; at least, the imagination finds it hard to picture any which are not.

I have read descriptions of Paradise that would lead all sensible people to renounce it at once : some persons would have the happy shades play eternally on the flute ; others condemn them to the torture of a never ending promenade ; others, who make them dream in heaven of their mistresses on earth, have expressed their belief that even a hundred millions of years would not be long enough to take from them the zest for amatory excitements.

I remember hearing a story bearing on this subject from a man who had been in the country of the Mogul ; it shows that Indian priests are just as vague in their ideas as others as to the pleasures of Paradise.

A woman, after losing her husband, was paying a ceremonious visit to the governor of the city for the purpose of getting permission to burn herself alive ; but because in the parts of India subject to the Mahometans, this cruel custom has been abolished, as far as possible, she met with an absolute refusal.

When she saw that her prayers were in vain, she flew into a furious passion. " See," said she, " how we are oppressed ! A poor woman is no longer allowed to burn herself when she wants to do so ! Did any one ever see the like ? My mother, aunt, and sisters burned themselves ! And, when I ask this rascal of a governor to let me do the same, he grows quite angry and raves like a madman."

A young bonza happened to be standing near. " Infidel," said the governor, " was it you who put this insane notion into this woman's head ?" — " No," he replied, " I have not spoken to her ; but if she will take my advice, she will consummate the sacrifice ; her reward will be great : she will meet her husband again in the other world and renew her marriage with him." — " What's that you say ?" exclaimed the woman, in astonishment. " Meet my husband again ?

Ah! then I sha'n't burn myself. He was jealous, peevish, and so old that unless the god Bramah has wrought some change in him, he has certainly no need of me. Burn for him! — no, not if the burning of the tip of one of my fingers were to draw him out of hell. The two old bonzas who led me astray and who knew how I lived with him, took good care not to tell me that. If this is the rich present, though, that god Bramah is going to give me, he may keep it for himself. Mr. Governor, I am going to turn Mahometan at once. And as for you," she continued, turning to the bonza, "you can, if you like, go yourself to my husband, and tell him I am in the enjoyment of excellent health."

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXVII.

RICA TO USBEK

At —.

ALTHOUGH I am expecting you here to-morrow, I send you letters that came from Ispahan. Mine tell me that the ambassador of the Great Mogul has been ordered out of the realm. It is added that the king's uncle, who had charge of his education, has been arrested, conducted to a castle, where he is very closely guarded, and deprived of all his honors. I am moved by the fate of this prince, and pity him sincerely.

I confess, Usbek, tears always move me. The humanity within me is as much affected by the miseries of the unfortunate, as if there were no other men but them; and even the great, towards whom I feel rather bitter when they are in power, become the objects of my tenderness when they are in disgrace.

In fact, what use can they make of the most devoted attachment when they are prosperous? It implies too much

equality : they prefer respect, which does not ask for any return. But, as soon as they have descended from their lofty position, our laments serve to recall it to them.

There was a certain degree of artlessness, and of greatness as well, in the remark of a prince who, just as he was on the point of falling into the hands of his enemies, seeing his courtiers around him in tears, said : " Your tears make me feel I am still your king."

PARIS, the 3d of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXVIII.

RICA TO IB BEN

AT SMYRNA.

You have heard often enough of the famous king of Sweden : he was besieging a fortified town in a kingdom called Norway ; as he was visiting the trenches, in company with an engineer, he was shot in the head and killed. His prime minister was arrested on the spot ; the states have assembled and condemned him to lose his head.

He was accused of a great crime : by his calumnies, he had destroyed the confidence of the king in his people, — a felony, in my mind, deserving a thousand deaths.

For, if it is a bad action to blacken the meanest of his subjects in the mind of the prince, how great must be the crime of him who blackens an entire nation, and deprives it of the good will of the sovereign specially appointed by Providence to work out its happiness ?

I should wish men to speak to kings as the angels do to our holy Prophet.

You are well aware that, at the sacred banquets in which the Lord of Lords descends from the sublimest throne in the universe and mingles with his slaves, I have made unto my-

self a severe law to bridle an unruly tongue ; no one has ever heard me utter a single word injurious to the meanest of his subjects. When I had for a time to cease to be sober, I never ceased to be a gentleman ; and, in that test of our fidelity, I have risked my life, but never my virtue.

I cannot tell how it is that the wickedest prince is never as wicked as his prime minister.

If the former commits an evil deed, it is almost always at the suggestion of the latter ; so that the ambition of princes is never so dangerous as the baseness of his counsellors. But is it not incomprehensible that a man, who was appointed minister only yesterday, and may not be one to-morrow, should become in a moment the enemy of himself, his family, his country, and of generation after generation of the very people he is oppressing now ?

A prince has passions ; the minister arouses them : in fact, it is through them he hopes to retain power ; he neither has, nor wishes to have any other aim. The eulogies of his courtiers may mislead the monarch ; but the minister's flattery is an element in the counsels he gives him, the designs where-with he inspires him, and the maxims he offers for his consideration.

PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Saphar, 1719.

LETTER CXXIX.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

I was crossing the Pont-Neuf the other day, in company with a friend, who met one of his acquaintances, who was, he said to me, a geometer. His looks did not belie him, for he seemed in a profound reverie. My friend had to pull him by the sleeve for a considerable time before he came

down from the clouds, so much had a certain curve exercised him for the last week. They paid each other many compliments, and interchanged the literary news of the day. The conversation continued until we reached the door of a café, which we entered.

I noticed that our geometer was received by every one with respectful assiduity, and that the waiters made much more of him than of two musketeers seated in a corner. He seemed to find the place agreeable, for he unbended, and laughed as if he had not the least tincture of geometry about him.

For all that, his methodical mind was measuring everything that was said in the course of conversation. He resembled the man in the garden, who cut at every flower that lifted its head above its neighbor.

A martyr to exactness, he was as much offended by a sally, as a man of weak eyesight might be by too strong a light. To him nothing was indifferent, provided it were true: accordingly, his conversation was rather odd. He had come on that day from the country with a man who had been to see a splendid château and its magnificent gardens. But all he saw was a building sixty feet long and thirty-five broad, and a wood of ten acres, which had the form of a parallelogram. He would have liked that the rules of perspective had been properly observed, and that the avenues had everywhere the same width. He had an infallible method for realizing this. A dial he had hunted up gave him much pleasure, for it was constructed in a very singular fashion; and a scholar near me, who unfortunately asked if it marked the Babylonian hours, tried his temper exceedingly. A news monger having spoken of the capture of the castle of Fontarabia, he at once explained to us the properties of the curve described in the air by the bombs; fully satisfied with his knowledge on this point, their success had no interest for him. A man complained of having been ruined the winter before by a flood. "I am delighted with what you

have told me," said the geometer; "I see I was not mistaken in the observation I made, and that two inches more of water fell on the earth this year than last."

A moment after, he passed out, and we followed him. As he walked fast and neglected to look before him, he ran plump on another man. The shock was so violent that both rebounded, in reciprocal ratio to the velocity and mass of each. When they had somewhat recovered from their dazed condition, the new arrival said to the geometer: "I am very glad you jostled against me, for I have great news for you: I have just published my Horace."—"What!" exclaimed the geometer, "why, that must have been two thousand years ago!"—"You do not understand," rejoined the other. "It is a translation of that ancient author that I have just produced. I have spent twenty years in making translations."

"What! monsieur," said the geometer, "for twenty years you have not thought! You speak for others, and they think for you!"—"Monsieur," replied the scholar, "do you not think I am rendering a very useful service to the public by familiarizing them with good authors?"

"That is not quite my meaning. I esteem as much as anyone the sublime authors you burlesque; but you do not resemble them, for, if you were to translate forever, you would never be translated yourself.

"Translations are like those copper coins that have the same value as a piece of gold, and are of greater circulation even among the people; but they are always light and of base alloy.

"You wish, you say, to revive these illustrious dead, and I willingly admit that you give them a body; but you do not give them life; they always lack a soul to animate them.

"Why do you not devote yourself rather to the investigation of those sublime truths which simple methods of calculation

are enabling us to discover every day?" After these few words, they separated, not by any means well pleased with each other, I fancy.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Rebiab 2, 1719.

LETTER CXXX.

RICA TO —.

I WISH to write to you about a certain tribe called Quid-nuncs. They meet in a magnificent garden, where their busy idleness is always on the go. They are utterly useless to the state, and the fifty years they have spent in talking are about as effectual as if they had held their tongues for that period. However, they believe they hold a very important position in the eyes of the world, because their discourses and discussions are all upon gorgeous projects and mighty interests.

The basis of their conversations is a frivolous and absurd inquisitiveness: there is no cabinet so secret that they do not claim to penetrate its mysteries; they cannot consent to admit their ignorance of anything; they know how many wives our august sultan has, and the number of children he begets every year; and, although they do not go to the expense of spies, they are profoundly acquainted with the measures he is adopting to humiliate the Turkish emperor and the Great Mogul as well.

They have scarcely exhausted the present, when they make a rush on the future, and, outstripping Providence, anticipate its foreknowledge as to the acts of men. They lead a general by the hand, and, after praising him for a thousand follies he has not committed, they prognosticate a thousand others he is sure not to commit either.

They send armies flying like cranes, and tumble down walls like card castles; they have bridges over all the

rivers, secret pathways through all the mountains, immense arsenals amid the burning sands of deserts : they have everything — except good sense.

The man with whom I lodge received this letter from a quidnunc ; as I thought it rather singular, I kept it ; here it is : —

MONSIEUR, — I am rarely deceived in my conjectures as to the events of the times. On the 1st of January, 1711, I predicted that the Emperor Joseph would die in the course of the year ; it is true that as he was in excellent health at the time, I thought I might be laughed at, if I explained the matter too clearly ; and so the terms I used were a little enigmatical. But minds capable of reasoning understood me. On the 17th of April of the same year, he died of the smallpox.

As soon as war was declared between the emperor and the Turks, I searched for the members of our body through all the nooks of the Tuileries. I called them to order near the basin, and foretold that Belgrade would be besieged and taken. I have been fortunate enough to see my prediction accomplished. It is true that, about the middle of the siege I bet a hundred pistoles that it would be taken on the 18th of August ;¹ it was not taken until the next day : could one be nearer winning ?

When I saw that the Spanish fleet was landing troops in Sardinia, I judged it would make a conquest of the island. I said so, and this turned out true. Flated by my success, I added that this victorious fleet would land troops at Final for the conquest of the Milanese. As I found that this idea was not accepted so readily, I resolved to sustain it nobly. I bet fifty pistoles, and — lost them ; for that rascally Alberoni, in spite of the faith of treaties, sent his fleet to Sicily, and deceived two great statesmen at the same time, the Duke of Savoy and me.

All this has upset me so much, monsieur, that I have decided to predict always, but to bet never. Formerly we knew nothing of this custom of wagering in the Tuileries, and

¹ 1717.

the late Count de L. would hardly have tolerated it; but, since a troop of pretentious young sparks has made its way amongst us, we no longer know where we are. Scarcely do we open our mouths to tell some piece of news before one of these fellows offers to bet against us.

The other day, as I was unfolding my manuscript and steadying my spectacles on my nose, one of these swaggerers, seizing exactly the interval between the first word and the second, shouted at me: "I bet you a hundred pistoles it is n't." I pretended not to pay any attention to his braggadocio; and, continuing, in a still louder voice, said: "The Maréchal de ——— having learned" — "That's a lie!" he exclaimed; "your news is always extravagant; there's no sense in all that trash!"

I must ask you, Monsieur, to do me the favor of lending me thirty pistoles: for I confess those bets have somewhat embarrassed me. I send you copies of two letters I have written to the minister. I am, etc., ———.

A QUIDNUNC'S LETTER TO A MINISTER.

MONSEIGNEUR, — I am the most zealous subject the King has ever had. It was I who induced one of my friends to execute the plan I had formed of a book that would demonstrate that Louis the Great was the greatest of all the sovereigns who have deserved the title of Great. I have long been engaged on another work which will do still more honor to our nation, if your Lordship deign to grant me a privilege. My object is to prove that, since the beginning of the monarchy, the French have never been beaten, and that all the descriptions of our defeats by historians up to the present time are veritable fabrications. I have had many opportunities of correcting their narratives, and I venture to flatter myself that, if I am strong in anything, it is in criticism. I am, monseigneur, etc., ———

MONSEIGNEUR, — As we have unhappily lost Count de L., we beg of you to have the goodness to allow us to elect a president. Disorders have prevailed at our meetings, and state affairs have not been as thoroughly discussed as formerly. Our young people have absolutely no respect for their elders,

and discipline is unknown among them. Our assemblies are like a council of Rehoboam, in which the young men make sport of the greybeards. In vain do we represent to them that we were in possession of the Tuileries twenty years before they came into the world. I believe they will chase us from it in the end, and that, forced to flee from the places where we have so often evoked the shades of French heroes, we shall be compelled to hold our meetings in the Jardin du Roi, or even in some spot still more remote. I am, etc., ———

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of Gemmadi 2, 1719.

LETTER CXXXI.

RHEDI TO RICA

AT PARIS.

ONE of the things that most exercised my curiosity after my arrival in Europe was the history of republics and their origin. You know that most Asiatics have not even an idea of this species of government, and that their imagination has not, so far, been able to make them comprehend that there can be any ruling power which is not despotic.

The first governments of the world were monarchical; it was only by accident and the succession of ages that republics were formed.

Greece having been laid waste by a deluge, new inhabitants came to people it. Nearly all her colonies arrived from Egypt and the countries of Asia in her neighborhood; and, as all these lands were governed by kings, the people who left them were naturally governed by kings also. But, as soon as the tyranny of these princes became intolerable, their yoke was shaken off, and out of the ruins of these kingdoms arose the republics that rendered Greece so flourishing, and the only civilized nation in the midst of barbarians.

The love of liberty and the hatred of kings preserved the

independence of Greece for a long time and extended the republican form of government beyond her shores. The Greek cities found allies in Asia Minor; thither they sent colonies as free as they were themselves, which served as ramparts against the enterprises of the Persian kings. Nor is this all: Greece peopled Italy; Italy, Spain, and, perhaps, the Gauls. We know that the great Hesperia was, at first, Greece, which her neighbors regarded as the abode of felicity. The Greeks, not being able to discover this happy country at home, went in search of it to Italy; the natives of Italy, to Spain; and those of Spain, to Betica, or Portugal: so that all these regions bore the name at some time or other. These Greek colonies brought with them that spirit of freedom which they had inhaled in their own mild clime; and thus it is that we seldom see monarchies in Italy, Spain, or the Gauls, during these remote times. We shall soon learn that the peoples of the north and of Germany were not less free; for those who have found traces of royalty amongst them have in reality fallen into the mistake of taking leaders of armies or chiefs of republics for kings.

All this took place in Europe; as to Asia and Africa, they have always been ground down by despotism, with the exception of the cities in Asia Minor of which we have spoken, and the republic of Carthage in Africa.

The world was divided between two powerful republics, Rome and Carthage. We know absolutely nothing of the series of African princes who reigned after Dido, or how they lost their power.

The marvellous aggrandizement of the Roman republic would have largely contributed to the happiness of the world, but for the unjust distinction it made between Roman citizens and conquered nations, the excessive authority given to the governors of the provinces, the failure to observe the righteous laws enacted to check the tyranny of the latter, and, in fine, if these proconsuls had not been allowed to use the

very treasures accumulated by their rapacity to silence the voice of the law.

It would seem as if liberty was suited to the natural disposition of the inhabitants of Europe, and servitude to that of the inhabitants of Asia. In vain did the Romans offer to the Cappadocians the precious treasure of freedom: that pusillanimous nation rejected it, and embraced slavery with as much eagerness as other peoples embraced liberty.

Cæsar oppressed the Roman republic and subjected it to arbitrary power.

Europe groaned for a long time under the violence of military domination, and Roman moderation was changed into cruel oppression.

Meanwhile, a multitude of unknown nations issued from the north, rushed like torrents over the Roman provinces, and, finding conquest as easy as pillage, dismembered them and from the fragments founded kingdoms. These populations were free, and so excessively did they limit the power of their kings, that the latter were, properly speaking, only leaders of armies. Thus these kingdoms, although established by force, did not feel the yoke of the conqueror. When the tribes of Asia, like the Turks or Tartars, made conquests, being subject to the will of a single man, they thought of nothing but of giving him new subjects and establishing his unlimited authority by force of arms. But the nations of the north, having been free in their own countries, when they took possession of the Roman provinces, did not give their chiefs great authority. Some of these tribes, like the Vandals in Africa and the Goths in Spain, used to depose their rulers when they became dissatisfied with them; and, among others, the authority of the prince was limited in a thousand different ways: a great number of lords shared it with him, and no war was undertaken without their consent; the spoils were shared between the chiefs and the soldiers;

no impost could be levied by the prince, and the laws were made in the assemblies of the nation.

Such were the fundamental principles of all such states as were formed out of the Roman empire.

VENICE, the 20th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1719.

LETTER CXXXII.

RICA TO —.

I HAPPENED to be in a café five or six months ago ; there I noticed a rather fashionably attired gentleman who was listened to with much attention : he was saying how pleasant life was in Paris, and deploring the necessity that forced him to reside in the country. " I have," he said, " an income from land of fifteen thousand livres, and I should consider myself far luckier if I had a quarter of that property in money and in movable effects. It is all very well squeezing my tenants and crushing them with the costs of lawsuits ; this only renders them the more unable to pay their debts : I have never yet been able to see a hundred pistoles at one time. If I owed a thousand francs, and were arrested for the debt, I should be utterly bankrupt."

I left without paying much attention to this discourse ; but, finding myself yesterday in that quarter, I entered the same house and saw there a grave-looking man, with long, pale features, who, in the middle of five or six gossipers, seemed gloomy and pensive, until he suddenly broke into the conversation, saying, in a loud voice : " Yes, gentlemen, I am ruined ; I have no longer enough to live on, though I have actually in my house two hundred thousand livres in bank-notes, and one hundred thousand in money. I am in a frightful situation ; I thought I was rich, and here I am a beggar : if I had only a little plot of land to which I could

retire, I should at least be sure of having enough to live on ; but I have n't so much land as this hat would cover."

Chancing to turn my head in another direction, I saw a man grimacing like one possessed. "Ah!" he cried, "whom can any one trust to now? There is a traitor whom I believed so much my friend that I lent him all my money, and he has paid me back, has n't he? Oh, yes! What horrible perfidy! You may make any excuses for him you like, but in my mind he will always be a scoundrel."

Close by him was another fellow, very poorly dressed, who, raising his eyes to heaven, said: "God bless the plans of our ministers! May I live to see the shares go up to two thousand, and all the footmen of Paris richer than their masters!" I had the curiosity to inquire his name. "He is a man in the depths of poverty," was the answer, "for his trade is a poor one. He is a genealogist, and has hopes of recuperation from his art if these sudden fortunes continue, and our new millionnaires need his services for the improvement of their patronymics, the deodorizing of their ancestors, and the adorning of their carriages; he fancies he will be able to turn out as many people of quality as he wishes; and the possibility of such a multiplication of his customers makes his heart palpitate with joy."

Then I saw a pale, withered old man enter, whom I recognized as a quidnunc before he was seated. He was not, however, one of those who are always assured of victories and triumphs, and are invincibly armed against all reverses of fortune; on the contrary, he was one of the quakers, who are always the bearers of bad news. "Our affairs," said he, "are not going on well in Spain; we have no cavalry on the frontiers, and it is much to be feared that Prince Pio, who has a large force there, may exact contributions from all Languedoc." A philosopher, rather out at elbows, sitting opposite, was regarding the newsmonger with disdainful pity, and shrugging his shoulders at the loudness of his tones. I

approached him and he whispered in my ear : " Look at that idiot, entertaining us with his fright about Languedoc ; and here am I, who discovered a spot on the sun yesterday, which, if it increases, may knock all nature into eternal smash, and yet I have not said a word ! "

The 17th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXIII.

RICA TO —.

THE other day I visited a large library in a convent of dervishes, who are its guardians, but are compelled to admit the public at certain hours.

On entering I saw a solemn-looking person walking amid the innumerable volumes that surrounded him. I went up to him and begged that he would tell me the names of some large volumes, which, as I remarked, were much better bound than the others. " Monsieur," he replied, " I am here in a foreign country ; I know none of the inhabitants. Many people bother me with such questions, but you can see for yourself I am not going to read all these books to satisfy them. But I have my librarian, who will have no objection to meet your request ; he does nothing night or day but pore over those things. He is good for nothing else, and is a great burden to us, because he does not work for the convent — But I hear the dinner-bell ringing. Men placed, like me, at the head of a community, must be the first at all exercises." Thereupon the monk pushed me out, shut the door, and was off like a shot.

PARIS, the 21st of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXIV.

RICA TO THE SAME.

I RETURNED to the library the next day, where I found a man quite different from the one I had seen before. His manners were simple, his features intelligent, and his address courteous. As soon as I acquainted him with the subject of my curiosity, he set about satisfying it, and as I was a stranger, he added some very interesting information as well.

"Father," said I, "what are those large volumes over there about?"—"They are," he answered, "commentaries on the Scriptures."—"What a number of them!" I exclaimed. "The Scriptures must have been very obscure formerly and must be very plain now; are there any doubts still left?"—"Any doubts left! Good heavens! there are almost as many doubts as lines!" was the answer.—"Indeed! And what have those authors been doing then?" I said.—"Those authors," he rejoined, "have not been searching for what ought to be believed but for what they believed themselves. They have not regarded it as a book containing the dogmas that ought to be received, but as an authoritative basis for their own ideas; for this reason, they have corrupted all the meanings and twisted all the passages. It is a country on which men of all sects make descents, and which they pillage at their sweet will. It is a field of battle, on which hostile nations engage in conflict, attacking and skirmishing, all in their several ways.

"You see, there at your elbow, the ascetic books, or books of devotion; next to them are the works on ethics, far more useful; those on theology, utterly unintelligible, both on account of the matter and the treatment; then, the books of the mystics, or impassioned devotees—" "Ah! a moment, father," I interrupted, "do not go so fast; tell me something of the mystics."—"Monsieur," said he,

"devotion warms a heart easily aroused to passion, and the heart affects the brain, which is warmed also; the result is ecstasies and raptures. This is the delirium of devotion; often it reaches perfection; which means, it degenerates into quietism; you know that a quietist is a combination of the madman, the devotee, and the libertine.

"Yonder are the casuists, who reveal to the day the secrets of the night; who shape in their imagination all the demons which love can produce, collect, compare, and make them the eternal objects of their thoughts; happy for them if their hearts are not affected as well, and do not become the accomplices in the irregularities so artlessly described and so nakedly painted.

"You see, monsieur, that I think freely, and say what I think. I am naturally frank, and more so with you, who are a foreigner, who wish to know things, and know them as they are. If I chose, I might speak of all this with admiration; I might repeat again and again: 'This is divine; that is worthy of veneration; there is something marvellous in this;' and then one of two things would happen: either I should deceive you, or you would cease to respect me."

We had to adjourn the conversation to the next day, as the dervish was called away on business.

PARIS, the 23d of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXV.

RICA TO THE SAME.

I RETURNED at the hour appointed, and my friend led me to the same place we were in previously.

"There you see," said he, "the grammarians, glossers, and commentators." — "Father," I returned, "surely those people did not claim to have any title to the possession of good sense?" — "Oh," he replied, "their works are not the

worse on that account, for it is never seen in them : so the deficiency was rather an advantage than otherwise." — "Very true," I commented, "and I know not a few philosophers who would do well to apply themselves to sciences of the kind."

"Yonder," he continued, "are the orators, whose powers of persuasion are quite independent of reason, and the geometers, who persuade a man in spite of himself, and convince him in arbitrary fashion.

"On the other shelves are works on metaphysics, which treat of the sublimest questions, and bring you face to face with infinity everywhere ; the books on physics, which find nothing more marvellous in the economy of the vast universe than in the simplest machine of our artisans ; books on medicine, those monuments of the weakness of nature and the potency of art, alarming us when they treat of the slightest maladies, so strong is their presentation of the imminence of death, but restoring our sense of security, when they speak of the virtue of remedies, as if those would render us immortal.

"Close by them are the treatises on anatomy, which do not contain so much a description of the parts of the human body as of the barbarous names that have been given them ; and this is not likely either to cure the patient of his disease or the doctor of his ignorance.

"Yonder is the recess assigned to alchemy, which sends its adepts indifferently to the almshouses and to the insane asylums, as being places equally well suited to them.

"Here are works of science, or rather of occult ignorance, such as those dealing with witchcraft : execrable in the opinion of some, pitiable in mine. Such too are the treatises on judicial astrology — " "What's that you say, father? Treatises on judicial astrology!" I retorted with fire ; "why, they are the ones we make most of in Persia. They regulate all the actions of our lives and determine most of our enterprises ; the astrologers are, properly speaking, our

1. *Chlorophyll a* and *Chlorophyll b* were determined by the method of Arar and Collins (1971) using a Shimadzu 1601 UV-Visible Spectrophotometer.

[illegible][illegible]



confessors ; nay, they are more : they influence the government of the state." — "If that is the case," said he, "you live under a much harsher yoke than that of reason : it is certainly the queerest of all sovereignties ; I pity a family, and, still more, a nation, that allows itself to be ruled by the planets." — "We use astrology," I replied, "as you use algebra. Every nation has its own science, according to which it regulates its policy. All our astrologists together have never committed so many follies as one of your algebraists has done here. Do you not think that the fortuitous concurrence of stars is as safe a rule to follow as the fine reasonings of your system-mongers ? If the votes were taken on this point in France and Persia, it would be a glorious triumph for astrology. It is the mathematicians who would bite the dust : what a crushing corollary might be adduced against them from this fact !"

Our discussion was here interrupted, and we had to separate.

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXVI.

RICA TO THE SAME.

AT the following interview, my learned friend conducted me into a private chamber.

"These are the books on modern history," he said ; "yonder are the works written by the historians of the Church and of the Popes. I read them for edification, but they often have a quite contrary effect.

"The others are the historians of the decline of the great Roman empire, which was formed out of the ruins of so many old monarchies, and, by its fall, originated so many new ones. Countless hordes of barbarous tribes, as unknown

as the countries they came from, suddenly appeared, inundated, ravaged, and broke it up into fragments, and founded all the kingdoms which you now see in Europe. These people cannot properly be called barbarians, because they were free ; indeed, they might be said to have become so since, because they have been subjected to arbitrary power and lost that mild liberty which is so conformable to reason, humanity, and nature.

“ On these shelves you have before you the historians of Germany, which is but the shadow of the first empire, but yet, I believe, the only power in the world that division has not weakened ; the only one, I further believe, that gains strength by its losses, and which, though slow to profit by success, becomes indomitable under defeat.

“ These are the French historians, in whose works you may see the formation of the royal power, its death on two occasions, its restoration to life, and its deterioration during several centuries ; then, as it gradually recovered its strength and received fresh accessions of force from every direction, its rise to the highest degree of its grandeur ; like those rivers which lose their waters on their course, or are hidden under ground, but again come into the light, swollen by the streams that have flowed into them, and hurry along with them all the obstacles that oppose their passage.

“ Here, you see the Spanish nation issuing forth from some mountains ; the Mahometan princes as slowly subjugated as they had rapidly conquered ; a number of kingdoms again united into one vast monarchy, which became almost supreme, until, under the crushing burden of its fictitious opulence, it loses strength and even reputation, preserving but the arrogance derived from its origin.

“ And here are the historians of England, where we behold liberty constantly flaming up from the fires of discord and sedition ; the prince always tottering on an immovable throne ; a nation impatient indeed, yet self-restrained even

in its fury, which, as mistress of the seas (a thing unheard of until now) combines trade with empire.

"Beside them, are the historians of the republic of Holland, that other queen of the sea, so respected in Europe and so formidable in Asia, where her merchants see kings at their feet.

"The historians of Italy bring before your eyes a nation once mistress of the world, to-day the slave of all the others, her princes divided and feeble, and whose sole attribute of sovereignty is a fruitless system of policy.

"Yonder are the historians of the republics: Switzerland, the symbol of liberty; Venice, which has no resources except her economy; and Genoa, superb only in her edifices.

"These deal with the North, and especially with Poland, who makes such an ill use of her freedom and of her right to elect her own kings, that it would seem as if she wanted to console her neighbors for having lost theirs."

Thereupon, we separated until the next day.

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of Chalval, 1719.

LETTER CXXXVII.

RICA TO THE SAME.

THE next day he led me into another room. "This contains the poets," he said; "that is to say, the authors whose task it is to fetter common sense and overwhelm reason under the pretence of adorning it, just as women were formerly buried in all their gems and jewelry. You know them; they are not rare among the Orientals, where a more ardent sun would seem to set the imagination itself on fire.

"Yonder are the epic poems—" "Eh! what are epic poems?"—"To tell the truth," said he, "I do not know; connoisseurs tell us there have never been more than two,

and that all the other so-called epics are not epics at all. This also I know nothing of. They also say that it is impossible to make new ones, which is still more surprising.

"You are now in presence of the dramatists, who, in my opinion, are the only real poets and the only true masters of the passions. There are two kinds of them: the comic dramatists, who are the source of such agreeable emotions, and the tragic, who can throw us into the most violent excitement and agitation.

"Now you have before you the authors of idyls and pastorals, who are exceedingly popular with courtiers; they please the latter by pictures of a certain tranquillity which is strange to them, and draw a fanciful representation of its existence among shepherds.

"Of all the authors we have reviewed those before you now are the most dangerous: they are the persons who give a keen edge to epigrams, sharp little arrows that make a wound as deep as it is incurable.

"Here you may see the romancers; they are of the same breed as the poets, and commit as many outrages on the language of the mind and of the heart as they do. They spend their lives in searching for nature and never finding her, and create heroes as impossible as winged dragons and hippogriffs."

"I have seen," I remarked, "some of your romances; but, if you were to read ours, you would be still more disgusted. Apart from their utter want of naturalness, our manners have the effect of rendering them awfully tiresome. A lover must go through a ten years' course of passion before he can even see the face of his mistress. Yet the author must provide some amusement for his readers during this monotonous preliminary stage. Now, it is impossible to vary the incidents; so recourse is had to an artifice far worse than the evil it is intended to remedy, namely, to prodigies. I am sure you will hardly regard it as consistent with

the order of things for a sorceress to summon an army out of the bowels of the earth, or for one solitary hero to destroy a hundred thousand men. Yet such incidents are familiar to our romancers : these insipid and often repeated adventures weary us, and these extravagant wonders revolt us."

PARIA, the 6th of the moon of Chalval, 1719.

LETTER CXXXVIII

RICA TO IBBEN

AT SMYRNA.

MINISTERS in this country are like the seasons : they succeed and destroy one another with great regularity. I have seen the financial system changed four times during the last three years. Subsidies are levied in Persia and Turkey to-day as they were in the time of the founders of these monarchies. This is far from being the case here. It is true that we do not show as much ingenuity in this matter as the people of the West. We think there is no more difference between the administration of the revenues of a prince and those of a private person than there is between counting a hundred thousand tomans and counting a hundred. But there is much more delicate handling and mystery in dealing with such affairs here. The greatest minds have to work night and day, and have to suffer all the pangs of childbirth in bringing forth new plans. They must listen to the advice of crowds of people who toil for them gratuitously ; must live retired in some remote cabinet which the great cannot penetrate and the little regard with awe ; must always have their heads stuffed with important secrets, miraculous designs ; and new systems ; and must be so absorbed in their meditations as to forget the use of language, and, sometimes, the dictates of politeness.

As soon as the late king closed his eyes, the question of establishing a new administration became prominent. Things were felt to be going on badly, but how to mend them was the difficulty. The unlimited authority of preceding ministers was not thought to have worked well: it ought, therefore, to be divided. For this purpose, six or seven councils were created. The ministry thus formed has, perhaps, governed France with sounder judgment than any of its predecessors: its duration was short as well as the good which it effected.

France, at the time of the king's death, was a body on which fed innumerable diseases. N—— took the knife in his hand, cut off the useless flesh, and applied some local remedies; but the internal seat of these maladies was never reached. A stranger arrived and undertook its cure. After many violent remedies, he supposed that he had restored the patient to her normal plumpness, but he had only rendered her unnaturally obese.

All those who were rich six months ago are now destitute, and those who had not bread are gorged with wealth. Never have these two extremities touched so nearly. This foreigner has turned the state as a dealer in old clothes turns a coat: he placed what was uppermost under, and what was under uppermost. What unexpected fortunes, fortunes incredible even to those who made them! God could not create human beings out of nothing faster. How many lackeys are now waited on by their fellows, to be waited on to-morrow, perhaps, by their masters!

These odd changes are naturally rich in surprises. The footmen who made their fortunes during the last reign boast of their birth to-day. They lavish on those who have just stripped off their livery the scorn of which they were themselves the objects six months ago. They cry out, with all their strength: "The nobility is ruined! Such disorder in the state! what confusion of ranks! fellows utterly unknown

making fortunes on every side !” The latter, I promise you, will have their revenge as well, on those who come after them, and in thirty years these people of quality will make some noise.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Zilcade, 1720.

LETTER CXXXIX.

RICA TO THE SAME.

I HAVE to tell you of a grand instance of conjugal affection, not only in a woman, but in a queen. The queen of Sweden, determined at all risks that her husband should share her throne, has sent, in order to remove every difficulty, a declaration to the states, informing them that she will resign the regency, if her husband is elected.

Sixty years ago, another queen, named Christina, abdicated the crown, so that she might have leisure to devote herself entirely to philosophy. I know not which of these two examples is the most to be admired.

Although I am a firm believer in every one keeping the position which nature has assigned him, and feel anything but admiration for the weakness of those who, from a belief that they are unequal to the duties of their state, abandon it, somewhat like deserters, yet am I struck by the greatness of soul of these two princesses, and at seeing the mind of the one and the heart of the other superior to their fortune. At an age when the mind of others is concentrated on enjoyment, that of Christina was fixed on the acquisition of knowledge, and the only enjoyment sought for by the queen of Sweden is to place all her happiness in the hands of her husband.

PARIS, the 27th of the moon of Maharram, 1720.

LETTER CXL.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

THE Parliament of Paris has just been banished to a little town called Pontoise. The council sent a declaration to be registered or approved which would dishonor it, and it registered it in a manner which dishonored the council.

Some other parliaments of the realm are menaced with similar treatment.

These bodies are always the object of hatred. They approach kings only for the purpose of telling them unpleasant truths ; and, while a crowd of courtiers are constantly assuring them that the people are happy under their rule, they give the lie to the flattery, and bring to the foot of the throne the groans and tears of which they are the depositaries.

Truth, my dear Usbek, is a heavy burden when it has to be carried to the ears of princes : they ought to be well assured that those who do so are impelled by a force they cannot resist, and that they could never have resolved on such a step, entailing such melancholy consequences on those who take it, were they not urged thereto by their duty, respect, and even love.

PARIS, the 21st of the moon of Gemmadi 1, 1720.

LETTER CXLI.

RICA TO THE SAME

AT ———.

I INTEND calling upon you towards the end of the week. How pleasantly the days will slip by in your company !

I was presented, some days ago, to a lady of the court, who expressed a desire to see my foreign countenance. I found her beautiful, worthy of the eyes of our monarch, and well deserving of an exalted rank in the sacred place where his heart reposes.

She asked me a thousand questions about the manners of the Persians, and the way in which our women live. Evidently the life of the seraglio was not to her taste, for she intimated her antipathy to the custom of sharing one man between ten or twelve women. She could not contemplate the happiness of the former without envy, or the condition of the latter without pity. As she is fond of reading, and particularly so of reading poets and story-tellers, she wished me to speak of ours. What I said of them increased her curiosity. She begged me to translate a fragment of some of those I had with me. I did so, and sent her, some days after, a Persian tale : perhaps you might like to see it travestied.

In the time of Sheik Ali Khan, there was a woman in Persia named Zulema : she knew all the sacred Koran by heart ; no dervish understood better than she did the traditions of the holy prophets ; she comprehended all the meanings of every mystery propounded by the Arab doctors ; and to all this mass of knowledge were joined a liveliness and gayety which left her hearers doubtful whether she meant to amuse or instruct them. Happening to be on a certain day in an apartment of the seraglio with her companions, she was asked by one of them what she thought of the next life, and whether she had any faith in that ancient tradition of the doctors, that Paradise was made for men alone.

"It is the common sentiment," she answered. "Nothing has been left undone to degrade our sex. In fact, it is the opinion of a nation scattered over Persia, called the Jewish people, that we have no souls, and they base it on the authority of their sacred books.

"These insulting notions have no other origin than the arrogance of man, who would extend his authority even beyond his present life, and forgets that, on the great day, all creatures will appear before God as nothing, divested of every privilege except that which virtue has acquired.

"God will not limit Himself in His rewards ; and, just as men who have lived well, and made a good use of the power they possessed over us here below, will dwell in a Paradise filled with beauties so divine and enchanting that, were a mortal to see them, he would at once kill himself, out of his impatience to enjoy them, virtuous women will also go into an abode of delight, where they will be intoxicated with a torrent of pleasure in the embraces of godlike men who will be placed at their service ; each woman will have a seraglio in which these men will be shut up, under the guardianship of eunuchs far more faithful than ours.

"I have read," said she, "in an Arabian book, that a man, named Ibrahim, was insupportable on account of his jealousy. He had twelve exceedingly beautiful wives, whom he treated with great harshness. Not satisfied with confiding them to the watchfulness of his eunuchs or trusting in the walls of his seraglio, he almost always kept them under lock and key in their several rooms. He would not allow them to converse together, for he was jealous even of an innocent friendship. All his actions were colored by his natural brutality : never did his lips utter a gentle word, and never did he make a gesture which had not the effect of adding to the rigor of their slavery.

"One day when he had assembled them all in an apartment of the seraglio, a woman, bolder than the others, reproached him with his savage temper. 'The person,' she said, 'who is so industrious in his search for the means of inspiring fear, is always sure to find the means of inspiring hatred instead. We are so unhappy that we cannot help wishing for a change : others in my place might desire your death,

I only desire my own ; and, as I have no hope of being separated from you except by death, death, when it comes, will be the sweeter to me for that very reason.' These words, which should have excited his compassion, threw him into a furious rage ; he drew his dagger, and plunged it into her breast. 'My dear companions,' she said, in a dying voice, 'if Heaven takes pity on my virtue, you will be avenged.' With these words, she quitted this miserable life, and passed into that delightful land in which virtuous women enjoy a happiness that is every day renewed.

"At first she saw a smiling meadow, whose verdure was set off by pictures of the gayest flowers ; a stream, whose waters were purer than crystal, flowed through it, with a thousand meandering turns. She next entered an enchanting grove, whose silence was broken only by the sweet warbling of birds. Afterwards appeared splendid gardens, on which nature had bestowed all her tasteful simplicity as well as all her magnificence. At length, she reached a superb palace, which had been prepared for her reception and filled with celestial men appointed for her pleasure.

"Two of them came forward at once to disrobe her ; others placed her in a bath and perfumed her with the most delicious essences ; she was then presented with garments infinitely richer than her own, and led into a large apartment, where a fire was burning made of odoriferous woods, and a table was set covered with a most exquisite repast. Everything seemed to combine to enrapture the senses : she heard on one side a strain of heavenly music, made even more so by its surpassing tenderness ; on the other, she saw the dances of these divine beings, solely occupied in pleasing her. However, all these pleasures served only as a preparation for pleasures still more ravishing. She was conducted to her chamber, and, after having been once more undressed, borne to a gorgeous couch, where two men of bewitching beauty received her in their arms. Then she was indeed

intoxicated, and her transports surpassed even her desires. 'I am beside myself with rapture,' she exclaimed; 'I should believe myself dying were I not sure of immortality. It is too much, leave me; I am overpowered by the excessive vehemence of pleasure. Yes, now you restore a little calmness to my senses; I begin to breathe and return to myself. Why have the torches been taken away? Why can I not still gaze upon your divine beauty? Why can I not see — But why see? You make me fall back into my former transports. Ye gods! how delightful is this darkness! What! I shall be immortal, and immortal with you! I shall be — No, grant me a respite, for I see that you are the kind of people who never ask for one.'

"After reiterated commands, she was obeyed; but yet not obeyed, until she showed she was in serious earnest. Languishing, she gave herself up to repose, and fell asleep in their arms. It required only two moments' rest to restore her strength; she received two kisses which inflamed her at once, and made her open her eyes. 'I am anxious,' said she; 'I fear that you love me no more.' It was a doubt in which she did not wish to continue long; and so she had with them as many illustrations of the contrary as she could desire: 'I am disabused,' she cried; 'pardon me; I am sure of you: you say nothing, but your actions prove it better than anything you could say. Yes, yes, I confess it, no one has ever loved me to such a degree. But what! you are disputing as to which shall have the honor of convincing me! Ah! if you dispute, if you unite the ambition of defeating me to the pleasure of doing so, I am lost; you will both be the victors, and I alone the vanquished; but I will make you pay dear for your victory.'

"All this continued without interruption until daybreak.

"Her courteous and faithful attendants entered her chamber and caused these two young men to rise; two old men led them back to the apartment where they were kept for

her pleasure. She rose afterwards, and showed herself to a court that idolized her, at first, in the charms of a simple undress, and, subsequently, in the most magnificent raiment. That night had enhanced her beauty, given fresh animation to her features, and a livelier fascination to her expression. The remainder of the day was spent in dancing, concerts, festivals, sports, and promenades ; and it was noticed that Anais withdrew from time to time and fled to her two young heroes. After she had interviewed them for a few moments, she returned to the company she had left, her countenance always displaying an ever increasing serenity. At length, towards evening, she was lost sight of entirely : she had gone to shut herself up in the seraglio, where she wished, she said, to make acquaintance with those immortal captives who were to live with her forever. She therefore visited the most remote and most charming apartments of this palace, where she counted fifty slaves whose beauty was simply miraculous. She wandered all the night from chamber to chamber, where the homage she received in each was always different, and yet always the same.

“ Such was the manner in which the immortal Anais spent her life, now in the midst of brilliant pleasures, now in solitary ones, now the centre of a splendid circle of admirers, now in the arms of an impassioned lover. Often she abandoned an enchanted palace and retired into a rustic grotto. Flowers seemed to spring up under her feet, and pastimes innumerable were always within her reach.

“ She had been more than a week in this abode of bliss, so transported with delights that she never gave a solitary thought to the past. She had enjoyed her happiness unconsciously, and had had none of those tranquil moments, when the soul, so to speak, takes stock of itself, and listens to its own language while the passions are dumb.

“ The pleasures of the blessed are so keen that they rarely have such freedom of mind ; being invincibly attached to the

present they lose the memory of the past, and no longer take thought of what they had known and loved in their previous life.

"But Anais possessed a truly philosophical intellect, and had passed her earthly career in meditation; her reflections had gone much farther than was to be expected in the case of a woman abandoned to herself. It was the only advantage left her in the austere seclusion in which her husband kept her. It was this strength of mind that enabled her to despise the fears that appalled her companions, and to welcome death as the end of her sorrows and the beginning of her joys.

"Thus she gradually escaped from the intoxication of pleasure, and shut herself up alone in an apartment of her palace. There, she gave free rein to pleasant reflections on her past condition and present felicity; she could not help being moved by the wretchedness of her companions; the torments we have shared affect our sensibility. Anais did not remain within the mere limits of compassion; her tenderness for these unfortunates induced her to help them.

"She ordered one of her young men who was by to assume the figure of her husband, go to the seraglio, become its master, expel him from it, and remain in his place until further orders.

"The execution was prompt: he clove the air, and, in a moment, was at the door of Ibrahim, who happened to be out. He knocked; it was at once opened; the eunuchs fell at his feet: he sped to the apartments where the wives of Ibrahim were imprisoned. He had, on his way, taken the keys out of the pocket of that old growler, to whom he was invisible. He enters, surprises them, first, by his gentle and courteous demeanor, and, soon after, surprises them still more by the alacrity and rapidity of his enterprises. All had equal reason for their amazement, and they would have taken him for the phantom of a dream, if he had not shown that he was very real indeed.

"While these novel scenes were being enacted in the seraglio, Ibrahim thundered at the door, gave his name, stormed and shouted. After surmounting innumerable difficulties, he entered and excited the greatest alarm among the eunuchs. He strode along enraged, but leaped back, like one who had fallen from the clouds, when he saw the false Ibrahim, his living image, exercising all the rights of a master. He cried for help, he called on his eunuchs to aid him in killing this impostor, but he was not obeyed. The only resource left him, and it was a weak one, was to submit the case to the judgment of his wives. In an hour the false Ibrahim had seduced all his judges. He was dragged ignominiously from the seraglio, and would have suffered a thousand deaths, had not his rival ordered his life to be spared. Thus the new Ibrahim remained master on the field of battle, where he showed himself more and more worthy of his position, and signalized his presence by miracles till then unknown.

"'You do not resemble Ibrahim,' said these women. — 'Say rather,' said the triumphant Ibrahim, 'that this impostor does not resemble me. What could he do to prove himself your husband, if what I do is not sufficient?'

"'Ah, we shall take good care not to have any doubt on the matter,' said the women. 'If you are not Ibrahim, it is enough for us that you have so well proved your title to be him: you are more Ibrahim in a day than he has been in the whole course of ten years.' — 'You promise then,' he returned, 'that you will declare in my favor against this impostor?' — 'Have no doubt on that point,' they chorused; 'we swear eternal fidelity to you alone: too long have we been abused; it was not our virtue, it was his own impotence that the traitor suspected; we see clearly now that all men are not made like him; doubtless, it is you they resemble. If you knew how much you have made us hate him!' — 'Ah! I will often give you fresh reasons for hating him,' answered the false Ibrahim; 'you do not yet know

all the wrong he has done you.' — 'We judge of his wickedness by the greatness of your vengeance,' they answered. 'Yes, you are right,' said the godlike man; 'I have made the punishment fit the crime. I am very glad that you are satisfied with my method of punishment.' — 'But,' said the women, 'if this impostor returns, what are we to do?' — "It would be difficult, I imagine, for him to deceive you," he replied: 'the duties of the post I have occupied near you are seldom discharged by trickery; and, besides, I will send him so far away that you will no longer hear anything about him; in the mean time, I shall undertake the care of your happiness myself. I will not be jealous. I know the way of making myself safe with you without annoying you in any way. If you are not virtuous with me, with whom could you be virtuous?' This conversation lasted long between him and the women, who, more impressed by the difference between the two Ibrahams than by their resemblance, never even dreamed of seeking to have these marvels explained. At length, the despairing husband returned again to plague them; he found his entire household making merry, and his wives more incredulous than ever. It was no place for a jealous man; he went away in a rage, and, a moment afterwards, the false Ibrahim followed and laid hold of him; he then carried him up into the air and dropped him in a place four hundred leagues distant.

"Who can picture the desolation of these women at the absence of their dear Ibrahim! Already the eunuchs had resumed their natural severity; the whole household was in tears; sometimes they imagined that all that had happened was but a dream; they gazed anxiously on each other's features, and recalled the slightest incidents in their strange adventures; at last, Ibrahim returned, more lovable than ever. It soon became evident that his journey had not exhausted him. The behavior of the new master was so directly contradictory to that of the other that it excited

universal astonishment among his neighbors. He dismissed all his eunuchs, and kept open house for everybody; he would not even permit his wives to be veiled. It was a singular change to see them sitting side by side with men at banquets, quite as free as they. Ibrahim, with good reason, had assumed that the customs of the country were not made for people like him. However, he spared no expense. He dissipated with the utmost profusion the property of his jealous predecessor, who, on returning three years afterwards from the distant land whither he had been transported, found nothing left but his wives and thirty-six children."

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of Gemmadi 1, 1720.

LETTER CXLII.

RICA TO USBEK

AT ———.

HERE is a letter I received yesterday from a scholar: you may think it singular.

MONSIEUR, — Six months ago, a very wealthy uncle of mine left me five or six thousand livres and a house splendidly furnished. It is pleasant to have property, when you know how to make a good use of it. I have no ambition and no taste for pleasure; I have always remained in my study, when I lead the life of a scholar. It is the natural home of every curious investigator of antiquity.

When my uncle closed his eyes, I was anxious to have him interred according to the rites and ceremonies observed by the ancient Greeks and Romans; but I had neither lacrymatories, nor urns, nor antique lamps. Since then, I have acquired an excellent store of these precious rarities. A few days ago, I sold my silver plate, and bought an earthen lamp which had belonged to a stoic. I have removed all the mirrors that adorned the walls of almost every room in my uncle's mansion,

and, with the proceeds of their sale, have purchased a little looking-glass, somewhat cracked, once used by Virgil. I was enchanted to behold my features reflected where those of the Mantuan swan had been reflected before. Nor is this all: for a hundred louis d'or, I have acquired five or six copper coins which were current just two thousand years ago. I do not believe there is at the present moment a single article of furniture in my house which was made before the decline of the Roman empire. I have a little cabinet of very rare and very costly manuscripts. Although I am rapidly losing my eyesight from poring over them, I prefer them to printed copies, which are not so correct, and are, besides, in the hands of everybody. Although I never go out, I have an uncontrollable passion for all the ancient roads made by the Romans. There is one near me planned by a proconsul who lived about twelve hundred years before our time: when I go to my country house, I never fail to use it, although it is very inconvenient and takes me more than three miles out of my course; but it drives me distracted to see that wooden posts have been erected on it at regular distances to show how far the neighboring towns are. To have these wretched signposts before my eyes, instead of the military columns that were there formerly, makes me frantic. But I expect to have them restored by my heirs, and I intend to bind them in my will to do so. If you happen to have any Persian manuscript about you, monsieur, you will do me a great favor by letting me have it; I will pay you whatever you ask, and give you, over and above the bargain, some works written by myself, in which you will see that I am not a useless member of the republic of letters. You will notice among them a dissertation in which I demonstrate that the crown formerly worn in the triumphs was of oak and not of laurel; you will admire another, which proves, by learned conjectures drawn from the weightiest Greek authors, that Cambyzes was wounded in the left leg and not in the right, and another, in which I show that a low forehead was a beauty in great request among the Romans. I will also send you a quarto, which explains a line in the fifth book of the *Æneid* of Virgil. You will receive all these things in a few days, and, in the mean time, I am content with sending you this fragment of an ancient Greek mythologist, which has never

been published here, and which I have discovered in the dust of a library. I now conclude, for I am engaged on a most important affair, nothing less than the restoration of a fine passage in the naturalist Pliny, which the copyists of the fifth century have strangely disfigured.

I am, etc., ———.

FRAGMENT OF AN ANCIENT MYTHOLOGIST.

IN an island near the Orcades, a child was born whose father was Æolus, god of the winds, and whose mother was a nymph of Caledonia. It was said of him that he learned, without any help, to count by means of his fingers, and that, though he was only four years old, he distinguished the difference between metals so perfectly that, when his mother gave him a tin ring, instead of a gold one, he saw through the trick and flung it on the ground.

As soon as he was full grown, his father taught him the art of enclosing the winds in bags made of skins, and he sold them to such as went to sea. But as this merchandise was not very highly appreciated in his own country, he abandoned the latter and set about travelling through the world, in company with the blind god of chance.

He learned during his pilgrimage that Betica was a land where gold glistened in every direction: so he hurried thither as fast as his legs could carry him. But he was very ill received by Saturn, who was reigning at that time. But as soon as this god quitted the earth, he decided to go to all the crossways, where he cried incessantly in a hoarse voice: "People of Betica, you believe you are rich, because you have gold and silver: your error excites my compassion. Be guided by me, abandon the land of the vile metals and come into the empire of the imagination, and I promise you wealth at which you will be yourselves astonished." Immediately he opened a large number of the skin-bags, and distributed his merchandise at will.

Next day he returned to the same crossways and cried : " People of Betica, would you be rich? Imagine that I am very rich, and that you, too, are very rich. Get it into your heads every morning that your fortune has doubled during the night ; then rise, and if you have creditors, go and pay them with what you have imagined, and tell them to imagine in their turn."

He made his appearance again a few days afterwards, and spoke thus : " People of Betica, I see clearly that your imaginations are not so lively as they were a while ago ; allow them to follow the lead of mine. I will place every morning before your eyes a bill which will be a source of wealth for you ; it contains only four words,¹ but they will be very significant words indeed, for they will regulate the dowry of your wives, the fortunes of your daughters, and the number of your servants. And as for you," he said, turning to those nearest him, "as for you, my dear children (I may call you by that name, for you have received from me a second birth), my bill shall regulate the magnificence of your equipages, the splendor of your festivals, and the number and pensions of your mistresses."

Some days afterwards he rushed into the crossways, quite out of breath, and, beside himself with rage, he shouted : —

" People of Betica, I have advised you to imagine, and I see that you don't imagine at all ; well, then, now I order you ! " Thereupon he abruptly left them, but on second thoughts he returned. " I learn that some of you have such an execrable disposition that you are actually keeping a tight grip on your gold and silver. As for the silver, I don't so much mind ; but for the gold — the gold — Ah ! I cannot restrain my indignation ; I swear by my sacred windbags that if the persons to whom I refer do not bring it to me they shall meet condign punishment at my hands ! " Then he added persuasively : " Do you think it is because I want to

¹ The price of shares (*les cours des actions*).

keep those miserable metals that I ask you to give them to me? In proof of my sincerity I can avouch that, when you took them to me a few days ago, I immediately gave you back the half."

On the next day he rather kept his distance from the crowd, and addressed them in soft and honeyed accents: "People of Betica, I learn that you have a portion of your treasures in foreign countries; I entreat you to bring them to me; you will please me thereby, and I shall be eternally grateful."

The son of Æolus was speaking to persons who felt anything but disposed for laughter, but at this they roared; this made him turn round abashed; but recovering his courage, he ventured on another little petition. "I know that you have precious stones; in the name of Jupiter get rid of them; nothing can bring you down to poverty faster than these kinds of things; get rid of them, I tell you; if you cannot do so yourselves, I'll send you some excellent business people for the purpose. What wealth is about to fall into your laps, if you do what I advise you! Yes, I promise you the very best things in my windbags."

At last he mounted on a platform, and in a tone of more assurance than ever, said: "People of Betica, I have compared your present happy condition with that in which I found you on my arrival here; you are now the richest people in the world; but, to crown your good fortune, please allow me to take away the half of your possessions." After these words the son of Æolus soared away on rapid wing, and left his audience in a state of terror that cannot be described; which seeing, he returned on the morrow, and thus discoursed: "I perceived yesterday that my language displeased you extremely. Well, then, consider all I said as unsaid. You are right, the half is too much. But I have other methods of attaining the end I have proposed. Let us all collect our wealth in the same place; we can do so

easily, because it does not occupy a great space." And immediately three-fourths of it had disappeared.

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of Chahban, 1720.

LETTER CXLIII.

RICA TO NATHANIEL LEVI, JEWISH DOCTOR,

AT LEGHORN.

You ask me what I think of the virtue of amulets. Why do you address me on the subject? You are a Jew and I am a Mahometan; that is to say, we are two very credulous people.

I wear always on my person more than two thousand passages of the holy Koran; I have a slip tied round my arm on which are written the names of more than two hundred dervishes; those of Ali, Fatme, and all the Pure are about my clothes in some twenty places.

However, I do not find fault with those who refuse to see any virtue in the use of certain words; it is much more difficult for us to answer their reasoning than it is for them to answer our experience.

I carry all these holy tatters through long habit, to conform to a universal practice. I believe that, if they have no more virtue than rings and other decorative articles, they certainly have not less. But it is in some mysterious letters that your confidence is placed, and, except for them, you would be in continual terror. Men are very unfortunate; they waver continually between false hopes and ridiculous fears, and instead of relying on reason, they invent monsters who intimidate them, or phantoms who seduce them.

What effect can the arrangement of certain letters produce? What effect can their disarrangement interfere with? What relation have they with the winds, that they should

appease tempests ; with gunpowder, that they should annihilate force, or with what physicians call the peccant humor and the morbid cause of diseases, that they should cure them ?

The most extraordinary thing in all this is that those who perplex their reason in the attempt to show a connection between certain events and certain assumed occult virtues, have to make quite as great an effort in order to prevent themselves from seeing their true cause.

You will tell me that certain charms have won a battle ; and I shall tell you that a man must be blind not to see in the situation of the field, the number or courage of the soldiers, or the experience of the captain, sufficient to produce the effect whose cause you are willing to ignore.

I admit, for the moment, that there are charms ; suppose you admit, for the moment, that there are none : for this is not impossible. The concession you make me will not prevent the two armies from fighting : do you hold that in such a case, neither of them can gain the victory ?

Do you believe that their fate will remain undecided, until some invisible power come to determine it ; that every attack will be ineffectual, all skill vain, and all courage useless ?

Are you convinced that the presence of death from so many different directions cannot originate those panic terrors you find so much difficulty in explaining ? Are you convinced that in an army of a hundred thousand men there cannot be a single poltroon ; that the cowardice of the latter will not affect another ; and that other, a third ; and the third, a fourth ? Nothing more is necessary to render an army, all of a sudden, hopeless of conquering, and the larger the army, the more hopeless it becomes.

Everybody knows, and everybody feels that men, like all creatures prompted by the instinct of self-preservation, dearly love life. This is recognized as a universal principle, and yet

it is asked why, on a particular occasion, they should fear to lose it.

Although the sacred books of all nations are full of these panic or supernatural terrors, I can imagine nothing more frivolous, because, in order to be certain that an effect which may owe its origin to a hundred thousand causes, is supernatural, there must be first an investigation as to whether any of these causes has acted; and such an investigation is impossible.

I do not care to enter further into the subject, Nathaniel: in my opinion, it hardly deserves such serious treatment.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Chahban, 1720.

P. S. — As I was finishing, I heard them crying out in the streets a letter from a physician in the provinces to a physician in Paris (for here every trifle is printed, published, and purchased); I thought it well to send it to you, as it has some bearing on the subject. There are many things in it I do not understand; but you, who are a doctor, ought to know the language of your brethren.

LETTER FROM A PHYSICIAN IN THE PROVINCES
TO A PHYSICIAN IN PARIS.

WE had a patient in our town who did not sleep for thirty-five days; his doctor prescribed opium, but could not get him to take it; and when the patient had the cup in his hand, he felt more repugnance for the draught than ever. At length he said to his physician: "Monsieur, grant me a respite until to-morrow: I know a man who does not practise medicine, but has a multitude of remedies against insomnia in his house; permit me to send for him; and, if I do not sleep to-night, I promise to avail myself of your services." When the doctor was gone, the sick man drew the curtains and said to his page: "Go at once to M. Ania, and tell him

I want him." M. Anis obeyed the summons. "My dear Anis," said the patient, "I am dying, I cannot sleep; would you not have in your shop the C. of G., or better still some book of devotion composed by a R. P. J., which you have not sold? for the remedies longest in stock are often the best." — "Monsieur," said the bookseller, "I have Father Caussin's 'Holy Court,' in six volumes, which is at your service: I will send it at once, and I hope it may do you good. Should you desire the works of the revered Father Rodriguez, the Spanish Jesuit, you can also have them. But, if you take my advice, you'll stick to Father Caussin. With God's help, I expect that a single sentence of Father Caussin will do you as much good as a whole page of the C. of G." Thereupon M. Anis left, and ran to his shop to get the remedy. The "Holy Court" arrived, and, after it was well dusted, the son of the sick man, who was a young scholar, began to read: he was the first person affected; at the second page, his articulation became indistinct, while the rest of the company were already dozing; a few minutes after, every one was snoring, except the sick man, who resisted for a time, but eventually fell into a deep slumber.

The doctor returned in the morning: "Well, did he take the opium?" There was no answer; the wife and daughter and young son pointed to Father Caussin. He asked them what they meant; they told him. "Long live Father Caussin!" was the cry: "we must have him rebound. Who could have thought of such a thing! who could have believed it! it is a miracle! stay, monsieur, take a look at Father Caussin. That is the volume that made our father sleep;" and then there was an explanation of everything that had passed.

The doctor was a subtle man, thoroughly acquainted with all the mysteries of the cabala and the power of words and of spirits. After reflecting a long time, he resolved to change his method of practice absolutely. "This is a very

singular fact," he said; "I have met with an experience which I must really utilize. Why should not a spirit transmit to a work the same qualities it possessed itself? Do we not see such things happen every day? At least, the trial is well worth making. I am weary of the apothecaries; their syrups and juleps and all their Galenian drugs ruin patients and their health as well. Suppose we alter the system, and see what virtue there is in spirits." Following out his idea, he invented a new pharmacy, as you will see by the description I am going to give you of the principal remedies he used in his practice.

Purgative Tisane.

Take three leaves of Aristotle's Logic in Greek; two leaves of a treatise on Scholastic Theology, the acutest you can find, as, for example, that of the subtle Scott; four of Paracelsus; one of Aricenna; three of Porphyry; as many of Plotinus; as many of Iamblichus: infuse the whole for twenty-four hours, and take four doses a day.

A more Violent Purgative.

Take ten A—— of the C——, concerning the B—— and the C—— of the L——; distil them in a water bath; dilute an acrid and pungent drop that will come from the mixture in a glass of fresh water: drink off the whole with confidence.

An Emetic.

Take six harangues; a dozen funeral orations: any ones will do, except those of M. of N., which are to be carefully excluded; a collection of new operas; fifty romances; thirty new memoirs: put the whole in a *matras* ⁽¹⁾: let it dissolve for two days, then distil it in a sand-bath. And if all this does not work —

¹ Chemical vessel formerly in use.

A still more Powerful Emetic.

Take a sheet of marbled paper, which has served as a cover for a collection of the writings of the J. F. ; infuse it for three minutes ; have a spoonful of this infusion warmed, and swallow it.

A very Simple Remedy for the Cure of Asthma.

Read all the works of the reverend Father Maimbourg, ex-jesuit, taking care to stop only at the end of each period, and your power of breathing is sure to return gradually, nor will you need to repeat the remedy.

A Preventative against the Itch, Rash, Sorehead, and the Farcy.

Take three of the categories of Aristotle, two metaphysical degrees, one distinction, six verses of Chapelain, a phrase from the letters of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran : write the whole on a slip of paper, which you will fold and tie with a ribbon : then wear it round the neck.

Miraculum chymicum, de Violenta Fermentatione cum Fumo, Igne, et Flamma.

Misce Quesnellianam infusionem cum infusione Lallemaniana ; fiat fermentatio cum magna vi, impetu et tonitru, acidis pugnantibus, et invicem penetrantibus alcalinos sales : fiet evaporatio ardentium spirituum. Pone liquorem fermentatum in alembico : nihil inde extrahes, et nihil invenies, nisi caput mortuum.

Lenitivum.

Recipe Molinæ anodynæ chartas duas ; Escobaris relaxativi paginas sex ; Vasquii emollientis folium unum : infunde in aquæ communis libras iiij. Ad consumptionem dimidiæ

partis colentur et exprimantur ; et in expressione dissolve
Bauni deterfivi et Tamburini abluentis folia iij.

Fiat clyster.

*In Chlorosim quam Vulgus Pallidos Colores aut Febrem
Amatoriam appellat.*

Recipe Aretini figuras quatuor ; R. Thomæ Sanchii de
matrimonio folia ij. Infundantur in aquæ communis libras
quinque.

Fiat ptisana aperiens.

Such are the drugs which our doctor uses in his practice, and with notable success. He does not wish, he says, to employ remedies the cost of which would ruin his patients ; especially as they are very rare and hardly ever found : as, for instance, a dedication which has never made anybody yawn, a preface too short, a pastoral that was really the work of the bishop issuing it, the work of a Jansenist condemned by another Jansenist or praised by a Jesuit. He said that these kinds of remedies were only to be found in the repertory of quacks, and for quacks he had an invincible antipathy.

LETTER CXLIV.

USBEC TO RICA.

I MET two scholars, a few days ago, in a country-house where I was visiting, who have a great reputation in this country. Their characters certainly astonished me considerably. The conversation of the first, evidently highly valued, amounted to this : "What I have said is true, because I said it." The conversation of the second might be epitomized thus : "What I have not said is not true, because I did not say it."

I rather preferred the first : a man's obstinacy does not, after all, affect me ; but a man's impertinence does so considerably. The first defends his opinions : they are his property ; the second attacks the opinions of others, and they are the property of the whole world.

Oh, my dear Usbek, how baneful is vanity to those who have a larger dose of it than is absolutely needed for self-preservation ! Such people wish to attract admiration by rendering themselves offensive to others. They try to be the superiors of their fellows, and they are not even their equals.

Come hither, ye modest men, and let me embrace you. You give to life all its sweetness and charm. You think you have nothing, and I tell you you have everything. You believe you never humiliate any one, and you humiliate every one. And, when I compare you in my own mind with those arrogant men I see everywhere around me, I hurl them from their tribunals, and stretch them prostrate at your feet.

PARIS, the 22d of the moon of Chahban, 1720.

LETTER CXLV.

USBK TO —.

A MAN of great intellect is difficult to please in society ; he selects very few acquaintances, and is bored by that numerous class which he is pleased to term bad company. He cannot hinder this feeling of distaste from finding outward expression, and, consequently, has many enemies.

Sure that he can make himself agreeable when he wishes, he very often neglects to do so.

He is inclined to criticise, because he sees more things than others and feels them more keenly.

He almost always ruins his fortune, because his intellect

places a great many more methods of doing this within his reach.

He fails in his enterprises, because he is too venturesome. His faculty of extended vision leads him to see objects at too great distances, even if it is not taken into account that, when his mind forms a plan, he is less struck by the difficulties it entails than by the means of conquering them he will find in his own resources.

He neglects small details, on which, however, depends the success of almost all great enterprises.

The man of moderate abilities, on the other hand, turns everything to account: he sees clearly that trifles are not to be neglected.

He is usually the object of universal approval. People feel as much delight in according it to him as in withholding it from the man of genius. While every one assails the latter, to whom nothing is pardoned, everything the former does is interpreted in his favor: vanity takes his side.

But if the man of genius has so many difficulties to contend with, what shall we say of the man of science?

I never think of the subject without recalling a letter from one of them to a friend of his. Here it is.

MONSIEUR, — I am a man who spends all his nights in observing through telescopes thirty feet long those bodies which revolve above our heads, and, when I wish to have some recreation, I take my little microscopes and examine a maggot or a mite.

I am not rich, and have only one room. I do not dare to make a fire, because I keep my thermometer in it, which the additional warmth would cause to rise. Last winter I thought I should die of the cold; and yet, although my thermometer, which was at the lowest degree, warned me that my hands were about to freeze, I was not disturbed in the least: now I have the consolation of having an exact knowledge of all the most insensible changes in the weather during the past year.

I hold very little intercourse with people, and know very

few amongst all those I see. But there is a man in Stockholm, another in Leipsic, and another in London, whom I have never seen, and doubtless never shall see, with whom I correspond so regularly that I never let a post pass without writing to them.

However, although I am not acquainted with a single person in my neighborhood, my reputation is so bad that I shall, in the end, be forced to leave it. I was rudely insulted five years ago, by a woman living near me, for dissecting a dog, which she claimed belonged to her. The wife of a butcher, who happened to be present, took her part, and, while the former was outrageously abusing me, the latter pelted me with stones, as well as Doctor —, who was with me, and who received terrible blows on the os frontal and occipital, whereby his mind was very much shaken.

Ever since, when a dog strays away from the end of the street, it is at once decided that he has passed through my hands. A worthy *bourgeoise* who had lost her pet, which she loved, she said, better than her children, came the other day and fainted in my room, and not finding it, summoned me before a magistrate. I believe I shall never be freed from the pertinacious malice of these women, whose shrill voices stun me incessantly with funeral orations on all the automata that have died during the last ten years.

I am, etc.

Every learned man was formerly accused of magic. I am not astonished at this. Each said to himself, "I have brought my natural talents to as high a pitch of perfection as they can reach; yet a certain scholar has surpassed me: clearly there must be some sorcery in this."

Now that these sorts of accusations have fallen into discredit, another course has been adopted, and a learned man can seldom avoid the reproach of irreligion or heresy. It does not matter whether he is held guiltless by the people or not; the wound is made, and will never entirely heal. It will be always a sore spot with him. Perhaps, thirty years after, an adversary will say to him, unobtrusively: "God forbid I should assert that the accusation was true! Still you

have been put on your defence." And in this way his very justification is turned against him.

If he write a history, though it may give evidence of loftiness of mind and purity of heart, he is the victim of endless persecution. He will be hauled before the magistrate on account of his version of some fact that occurred a thousand years ago ; and as his pen is not for sale, it will be attempted to make it a prisoner.

Yet such scholars are more to be envied than those miscreants who abandon their faith for a trifling pension ; who scarcely gain a single obolus by all their impostures ; who overturn the constitution of the state, diminish the rights of one power, increase those of another, give to princes what they wrest from the people, revive obsolete rights, flatter the passions that are fashionable in their time and the vices that are seated on the throne, imposing on posterity the more shamelessly that it has less means of nullifying their testimony.

But it is not enough for an author to have to endure these insults ; it is not enough for him to be in a condition of perpetual anxiety as to the success of his work. That work which has cost him so much sees the light at last. It brings down upon him attacks from every direction. And how was he to avoid them ? He had an opinion ; he has maintained it in his writings : little knew he that a man two hundred leagues away from him had stated the exact contrary ; and so war is declared.

Still, if he could hope to obtain a certain degree of reputation !— No. He is at most esteemed by those who have devoted themselves to the same department of knowledge in which he has been engaged. A philosopher has a sovereign contempt for a man whose head is stuffed with facts ; and he, in his turn, is regarded as a visionary by the person who has a good memory.

As for those who make profession of a scornful ignorance,

they would wish all mankind to be buried in the same oblivion reserved for themselves.

A man who lacks a certain talent compensates himself by despising it: he removes the obstacle placed between him and merit, and thereby finds himself on an equality with the person whose labors he dreads.

Finally, the doubtful reputation which an author may gain is acquired at the sacrifice of every pleasure and the loss of health besides.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Chahban, 1720.

LETTER CXLVI.

USBK TO RHEDI

AT VENICE.

It was said of old that good faith was the soul of a great minister. A private person can be at ease in the obscurity in which he is placed; he can become discredited only in the eyes of a few friends; he wears a mask before all others; but the witnesses of a minister who lacks probity are as numerous as the people he governs.

May I venture to add that the greatest evil caused by a dishonorable minister is not the ill service he does the prince or the ruin he inflicts on the people? In my opinion, there is another a thousand times more dangerous: it is the bad example which he gives.

You know that I have travelled much in India. There I have seen a naturally noble nation perverted in a moment, from the lowest to the highest in the land, by the evil example of a minister; I have seen an entire people, among whom generosity, probity, sincerity, and good faith were accepted at all times as being their distinguishing characteristics, become suddenly the basest of races; I have beheld

the disease spread, not sparing even the healthiest members ; the most virtuous men descend to mean actions, and violate at every opportunity the first principles of justice, on the vain pretext that these principles had been violated in their regard.

They appealed to odious laws to shield the vilest deeds, and to injustice and perfidy they gave the name of necessity.

I have witnessed the faith of contracts banished, the holiest conventions and all the laws of the family overthrown ; avaricious debtors, insolent in their poverty, becoming the base instruments of the fury of the laws and the harshness of the times, make a feigned payment instead of a real one, and plunge the knife into the bosom of their benefactors.

I have seen others, more unworthy still, purchase for almost nothing, or rather pick up from the ground, oak leaves, and substitute them for the substance of widows and orphans.

I have seen an insatiable thirst of riches suddenly spring up in all hearts, and a detestable conspiracy formed to acquire opulence, not by honest labor and noble industry, but by the ruin of the prince, the state, and the fellow-citizens of the conspirators.

I have seen a worthy citizen, in these unhappy times, never retire to rest without saying : " I have ruined a family to-day ; I shall ruin another to-morrow."

" I am going," said another, " with a man in black, who carries an inkhorn in his hand and a pointed weapon behind his ear, to assassinate all those to whom I owe anything."

Another said : " I see that matters are going well with me ; it is true that, when I went, three days ago, to make a certain payment, I left a whole family in tears ; that I made away with the dowries of two well-born girls, and deprived a little boy of all chance of an education ; it will kill their father, and the mother is broken-hearted ; but I did nothing that was not permitted by the law."

What greater crime can any one commit than that of the minister who corrupts the morals of a whole nation, degrades the most generous souls, tarnishes the splendor of rank, and exposes the highest birth to universal contempt?

What will posterity say, when it has to blush for the shame of its fathers, when it compares the steel of its ancestors with the gold of those to whom it immediately owes existence? I doubt not that the nobles will erase from their escutcheons a degree of nobility which dishonors them, and leave the present generation to the frightful infamy into which it has sunk.

PARIS, the 11th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1720.

LETTER CXLVII.

THE GRAND EUNUCH TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

MATTERS have arrived at a stage where they are no longer endurable: your wives imagined that your departure had given them entire impunity; horrible things are occurring here; I myself tremble at the harrowing tale I am about to narrate.

Zelis, on her way to the mosque, a few days ago, dropped her veil, and appeared with almost her entire face exposed before the people.

I found Zachi sleeping with one of her maids, — a thing forbidden by the laws of the seraglio.

By the merest chance, I intercepted a letter, which I send you; I have never been able to discover the person to whom it was addressed.

Yesterday evening, a young boy was found in the garden of the seraglio, and escaped by climbing over the wall. Add to this all that has not come to my knowledge, and you

will have little doubt that you are betrayed. I await your orders, and, until the happy moment I receive them, my position will be unendurable. But, unless all these women are placed at my discretion, I cannot be responsible for any of them, and will have sadder news to send to you every day.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 1st of the moon of Rhegeb, 1717.

LETTER CXLVIII.

USBЕК TO THE FIRST EUNUCH

AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

RECEIVE by this letter unlimited power over the entire seraglio : command with all the authority I could exercise myself ; let fear and terror march before you ; run from room to room, bearing punishment and chastisement in your train ; let consternation seize upon all, and let tears flow whenever you appear ; question the whole seraglio ; begin with the slaves ; spare not my love ; let all bend before your awful judgment-seat ; shed light upon the most hidden secrets ; purify that infamous place, and let banished virtue return thither. For, from this moment, on your head shall be the slightest faults committed. I suspect the intercepted letter was addressed to Zelis ; do you examine the matter with the eyes of a lynx.

At —, the 11th of the moon of Zilhage, 1718.

LETTER CXLIX.

NARSIT TO USBЕК

AT PARIS.

THE grand eunuch has just died, magnificent lord. As I am the oldest of your slaves, I have taken his place, until you inform me upon whom you have deigned to cast your eyes.

Two days after his death, a letter was brought to me which you had addressed to him : I took good care not to open it, but respectfully covered it up and locked it away, until such time as your sacred wishes in its regard might be known.

On yesterday a slave came to me in the middle of the night, and told me he had discovered a young man in the seraglio : I rose, examined into the affair, and found that it was a vision.

I kiss your feet, sublime lord, and entreat you to rely on my zeal, my experience, and my old age.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 5th of the moon of Gemmadi 1, 1718.

LETTER CL.

USBEEK TO NARSIT

AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

WRETCH that you are ! you have in your hands letters requiring the most prompt and severe action ; the least delay may drive me to despair, and you remain inactive under a vain pretext !

The most horrible crimes are of daily occurrence : perhaps the half of my slaves are deserving of death. I send you the letter which the first eunuch wrote to me on this subject before his death. Had you opened the despatch addressed to him, you would have found bloody instructions there. Read these instructions then, and rest assured you shall perish, if they are not executed.

At —, the 25th of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CII

SOLIM TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

DID I hold my peace any longer, I should be as criminal as all the culprits in the seraglio taken together.

I was the confidant of the grand eunuch, the most faithful of your slaves. When he saw death approaching, he summoned me and said these words: "I am dying; but the only sorrow I feel in quitting life is that my last looks have rested on the guilt of my master's wives. May Heaven preserve him from all the misfortunes which I foresee! May my menacing shade appear to these traitresses after my death to warn them of their duty and intimidate them still! Here are the keys of those dreaded retreats; go bear them to the oldest of the black eunuchs. But, should he exhibit a lack of vigilance after my death, be sure to inform your master." When he had spoken these words, he expired in my arms.

I know not what he wrote to you some time before his demise as to the conduct of your wives. A letter exists in the seraglio which would have been the messenger of dismay, had it been opened; that which you have since written has been intercepted three leagues from here: I do not know how it is, but everything seems to turn out unfortunately.

Meanwhile, your wives act as if they were wholly free from all restraint; apparently, since the death of the grand eunuch, they regard everything as permitted to them. Roxana alone is controlled by a sense of duty, and preserves her modesty. But the morals of the others grow more corrupt every day. You would no longer behold the impress of that stern and austere virtue on the features of your wives which reigned there formerly: the unfamiliar gayety that prevails around me is, in my opinion, infallible proof of the presence of an

unfamiliar pleasure also ; in the smallest things I notice that liberties are taken which have been heretofore unknown. There is even among your slaves a certain remissness in their duties and in the observance of the rules which amazes me they no longer exhibit that ardent zeal in your service which formerly animated the entire seraglio.

Your wives have been eight days in the country at one of your most remote houses. It is said they have succeeded in bribing the slave in charge of them, and that on the day before they arrived, he had concealed two men in a stone recess that happens to be in the wall of the principal apartment, and from which they emerged at night after we retired. The old eunuch who now governs us is a dotard, and believes everything he is told.

I am agitated by a wrathful desire to inflict vengeance oh these traitresses, and if Heaven willed that, in your interest, you should judge me capable of governing, I promise you that, if your wives were not virtuous, they would at least be faithful.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 6th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1719.

LETTER CLII.

NARSIT TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

ROXANA and Zelis have expressed a desire to go into the country ; I did not believe it consistent with my duty to refuse them. Happy Usbek ! you have faithful wives and vigilant slaves ; virtue would seem to have chosen the spot where I rule for her dwelling-place. Rest assured that nothing can pass here which your eyes would not love to look upon.

A mischance occurred lately which has caused me great

annoyance. Some Armenian merchants, newly arrived at Ispahan, had brought a letter for me from you ; I sent a slave for it, but he was robbed on his way back, and the letter was lost. Write to me, then, at once ; for I fancy, in view of the late changes, you must have matters of importance to communicate.

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 6th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1719.

LETTER CLIII.

USBK TO SOLIM

AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

I PLACE the sword in your hand. I confide to you the dearest thing at present in my possession, my vengeance. Exercise your new authority without pity or remorse. I have written to my wives to obey you blindly. Confounded by so many crimes, they will fall abashed before your eyes. To you must I owe my happiness and repose ; restore to me my seraglio as I left it. But begin by purifying it ; exterminate the guilty, and see to it that all tremble who meditate becoming so. What rewards may you not hope for from your master for services so signal ? With you it rests to rise even above your condition and win tokens of my approbation greater than you ever contemplated.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Chahban, 1719.

LETTER CLIV.

USBK TO HIS WIVES

AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

MAY this letter fall upon you like a thunderbolt hurled from the heavens amid lightnings and tempests ! Solim is your first eunuch, not to guard but to punish you.

Let all the seraglio bow to the dust before him. He will judge your past actions, and, for the future, will compel you to live under a yoke so rigorous that you will at least regret your liberty, if you do not regret your virtue.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Chahban, 1719.

LETTER (CLV.)

Usbet to Nessir

BLEST is the man who, conscious of all the value of a calm and easy life, centres his entire happiness in his own family, and knows no other land except that in which he has first seen the light of day !

I am living in a barbarous clime, where all that pains me is ever present to my gaze, and all that comforts is far away. A sombre sadness has me in its grasp, and the defection into which I fall is frightful : it seems to me as if I were sinking into annihilation ; and I only recover myself when a gloomy jealousy flames in my soul, and there begets fear and suspicion, hatred and regret.

You know me, Nessir ; you have always read my heart in your own. If you could perceive my deplorable condition now, it would arouse your pity. I have been expecting news from my seraglio for the last six months ; I count the moments as they slip by ; my very impatience lengthens them, and when the time so long expected arrives, a sudden revolution breaks out in my heart, and my hand trembles as it opens the fatal letter. The very anxiety which drives me to despair, I find a happier condition, and dread that a disaster worse for me than a thousand deaths may force me to abandon it.

But, whatever the cause that induced me to quit my country, although my flight from it saved my life, I can no longer, Nessir, remain in this frightful exile. Were I to do so, should I not die all the same, a victim to my vexations ?

I have urged Rica a thousand times to leave this foreign land ; but he pays no attention to my exhortations ; he pretends a thousand pretexts for remaining here ; he seems to have forgotten his country, or rather he seems to have forgotten me, so insensible is he to my mortifications.

Wretch that I am ! perhaps were I to behold my country again, the sight would but increase my misery. Ah ! what shall I do ? I am about to place my head at the disposal of my enemies. That is not all : when I enter my seraglio, I must demand an account of the fatal time of my absence ; and, if I find criminals there, how am I to deal with them ? And, if the very thought overwhelms me at such a distance, how must it affect me when I am obliged to see and hear what I dare not imagine without a shudder ? How will it be, in fine, if the very judgments I pronounce work to my own confusion and despair ?

I must imprison myself within walls more terrible for me than for the women who are guarded by them, and look into every corner with an eye of suspicion ; their eager show of affection can hide from me nothing : on my couch and in their embraces, my uneasiness will be an obstacle to my enjoyment ; even at a moment when reflections are out of the question, my jealousy will give birth to them. Vile refuse of human nature, base slaves whose hearts have been shut forever to the emotions of love, ye would no longer groan over your condition, if you knew the misery of mine !

LETTER CLVI.

ROXANA TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

HORROR, darkness, and terror reign in the seraglio ; a pall of mourning enfolds it in funereal gloom ; a tiger at every moment gluts his rage ; he has put the two white eunuchs

that is
every
affected
the
employment
to
re
of the
general

Here
of the
of the



to the torture, who have confessed nothing except their innocence; he has sold a part of our attendants, and obliged us to interchange the services of those left. Zachi and Zelis have been shamefully outraged, during the obscurity of the night, in their own rooms. The sacrilegious wretch feared not to lay his vile hands upon them. He keeps us each locked up in her apartment, and though alone we have to wear the veil; we are no longer allowed to speak to one another. It would be a crime to write, — nothing is free to us but our tears.

A band of new eunuchs has entered the seraglio; they waylay us night and day; our sleep is incessantly interrupted by their feigned or real distrust. My sole consolation in my misery is, that it cannot last long, and that death will put an end to my sorrows: it will soon arrive, cruel Usbek! I will not give you time even to put a stop to all these outrages.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2d of the moon of Maharram, 1720.

LETTER CLVII.

ZACHI TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

O HEAVEN! a barbarian has outraged me even by the very nature of the punishment inflicted. He has had recourse to that method of chastisement whose first peculiarity is that it alarms modesty, a chastisement which revives the memory of childhood's hour.

My soul was at first paralyzed with shame; but my self-respect soon awoke, and I made the vaults of the apartments ring with my cries. I might be heard appealing for mercy to the most degraded of mankind, and attempting to excite his pity, while he only became the more inexorable.

Since then, his insolent and servile soul has dominated mine. His presence, his looks, his words, all kinds of mis-

fortunes, press on me with crushing force. When I am alone, I have at least the consolation of shedding tears ; but when he appears before my eyes, I am transported with fury ; then I discover that it is impotent, and I fall into despair.

The tiger dares to tell me that you are the author of all these horrors. He would wrest from me my love and profane even the sentiments of my heart. When he utters before me the name of him I love, I can no longer complain, I can only die.

I have borne your absence and kept my love warm by love's own strength. Night and day every moment has been devoted to you. My love for you made me, perhaps, even a little imperious, and yours for me made me respected. But now — No, I can no longer endure the humiliation into which I have fallen. If I am innocent, return that you may love me ; if I am guilty, return that I may expire at your feet.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2d of the moon of Maharram, 1720

LETTER **CLVIII**

ZELIS TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

You are a thousand leagues away from me, and yet you deem me guilty ; you are a thousand leagues away from me, and yet you punish me.

The barbarous eunuch who laid his vile hands upon me did so by your orders ; it is the tyrant who outrages me, not the instrument of his tyranny.

You can, as your fancy dictates, redouble your ill usage. My heart is tranquil, for it no longer contains any love for you. You have degraded your soul, and become inhuman. Rest assured that you are not happy. Adieu.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2d of the moon of Maharram, 1720.

LETTER CLIX

SOLIM TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

I pity myself and I pity you : never has faithful servant sunk to such a depth of despair. We are both equally unfortunate ; I write to you with a trembling hand.

I swear to you by all the prophets of Heaven that, ever since you confided your wives to my care, I have watched over them night and day, and that my anxiety in their regard has never been a moment at rest. I initiated my ministry by punishments ; and I suspended them without my natural austerity being affected by the change.

But what am I saying ? Why do I boast of a fidelity that has been useless ? Forget all my past services ; look upon me as a traitor, and punish me for all the crimes I have been unable to prevent.

Roxana, the imperious Roxana — O Heaven ! whom shall we henceforth trust ? You suspected Zachî, but you had the utmost trust in Roxana ; yet her inexorable virtue was a cruel imposture ; it was the mask of perfidy. I have surprised her in the arms of a young man, who, as soon as he saw he was discovered, attacked me and struck me twice with a dagger. The eunuchs ran up, when they heard the noise, and surrounded him ; he defended himself long, and wounded several of them ; he then tried to return to her chamber to die, he said, beneath the eyes of Roxana. But at length he was overpowered by numbers, and fell at our feet.

I do not know, sublime lord, whether I ought to await your rigorous commands. You have placed the work of vengeance in my hands, and I ought not to let it languish.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1720.

LETTER CLX.

SOLIM TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

I HAVE decided ; the disasters you suffered are on the verge of disappearing ; I am about to punish.

Already I feel a secret joy ; my soul and yours will have full satisfaction ; we shall exterminate crime, and make even innocence turn pale.

O ye, who seem created with a contempt for all the senses, and who are filled with indignation at the promptings of your own voluptuousness ; ye eternal victims of shame and modesty, why cannot I summon you in crowds to this unfortunate seraglio, that you may be astonished at all the blood I am about to shed !

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1720.

LETTER CLXI.

ROXANA TO USBEK

AT PARIS.

YES, I have deceived you ; I seduced your eunuchs, made sport of your jealousy, and turned your horrible seraglio into an abode of pleasure and delight.

I am about to die ; the poison is coursing through my veins. Why should I stay here when the only man who bound me to life is no more ? I am dying ; but my spirit flits from its mortal home splendidly attended ; I have just sent before me those sacrilegious guardians who have spilt the finest blood in the world.

How could you ever have imagined that I could be so credulous as to believe I was stationed on this earth to wor-

ship your caprices, and that, while everything was permitted to yourself, you had the right to curb my desires? No! ~~Though I have lived in servitude I have always been free, I have modified your laws in harmony with those of nature, and my spirit has ever been disenthralled.~~

Yet you ought to be grateful for the sacrifice I have made in lowering myself to appear faithful to you ; in having cravenly held within my heart that which I should have proclaimed to the whole world, and finally, in profaning virtue in allowing my submission to your fancies to be decked with that name.

You were astonished that you did not find in me the transports of love ; had you known me well, you would have found instead all the violence of hate.

But you had long the advantage of believing that a heart like mine was meekly submissive to you ; we were both happy : you thought I was deceived, and it was I who deceived you.

My language, doubtless, appears strange to you. Do you think it is in my power to force you to admire my courage, even after I have crushed you with anguish? But it is nearly over, the poison consumes me ; my strength is leaving me ; the pen falls from my hand ; even my hatred grows weak ; I am dying.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the moon of Rebiab 1, 1720.

NOTES.

- | Page. | Line. | |
|-------|-------|--|
| 1 | | These "Reflections" were not published until 1751, at the head of the "Supplement," to which the "Lettres Turques" are added. |
| 7 | | Letter I was suppressed in the second edition (Cologne, Pierre Marteau, 1721). |
| 7 | 2 | "The virgin who bore twelve prophets": Fatima, daughter of Mahomet and wife of Ali. |
| 12 | | Letter V is suppressed in the second edition of 1721. |
| 22 | | Letters X and XI form one in the second edition of 1721, with some modifications. |
| 32 | | Letter XV is the first in the Supplement of 1754. |
| 33 | | Letter XVI is suppressed in the second edition, 1721. |
| 33 | 16 | The "three tombs" are those of Fatima and two of her relatives. |
| 43 | | Letter XXII is the second of the Supplement. |
| 46 | 21 | An allusion to the belief that the kings of France could cure the scrofula by touching it. The tradition goes as far back as Robert the Pious, son and successor of Hugues Capet. |
| 46 | 34 | The celebrated bull Unigenitus issued by Clement XI on the 8th of September, 1713. The opponents of Père Quesnel, whose propositions the bull condemned, were called "Constitutionnaires." |
| 47 | 7, 8 | "A book. . . . brought from Heaven": the Bible. |
| 47 | 24 | The Jansenists, according to M. Laboulaye. |
| 47 | 27 | "Certain dervishes": the Jesuits, and especially Père la Chaise. |
| 48 | | Letter XXV is suppressed in the second edition, 1721. |
| 54 | | The green-rooms of the theatres: |

Page. Line.

- 56 32 (and following) "Certain dervishes": the Inquisitors; "little wooden balls": beads; "pieces of cloth": scapulars. Santiago was once the capital of Galicia. Its cathedral contains the tomb of Saint James of Compostella, to which frequent pilgrimages are made.
- 60 Letter XXXII is suppressed in the second edition, 1721. The house it describes is the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, founded by Saint Louis for three hundred gentlemen whose eyes the Saracens had plucked out.
- 66 "A Greek poet": Homer. The quarrel as to the respective merits of the Ancients and Moderns lasted through the whole seventeenth century, and was revived in the eighteenth by J. B. Rousseau, Madame Dacier, and others.
- 67 9 (and following). "Who use a barbarous language": the theologians of the Sorbonne; "an entire nation": an allusion to the Irish college in Paris, founded by Irish refugees in 1677.
- 68 8 "The mistress of eighty" is Madame de Maintenon. She was seventy-eight in 1713.
- 74-76 The letters XLI to XLIII inclusive are suppressed in the second edition, 1721.
- 82 Letter XLVII is suppressed in the second edition, 1721, as are also letters LXV and LXX.
- 138 10 The Dictionary of the Academy, the first edition of which appeared in 1694.
- 138 10 "A bastard." The Dictionary of Tretière, which was published in 1685 and which caused the expulsion of its author from the French Academy, because he had encroached on its exclusive privilege. This work, which was frequently revised by the Jesuits, after Basnage de Beauval, is known to-day as the "Dictionnaire de Trevons."
- 144 Letter LXXVII is the third in the Supplement of 1754.
- 148 1 Without accepting the severe judgment of Montesquieu, it must be admitted that if "Don Quixote,"

- Page. Line.
- to which he refers, is not the only great work in Spanish literature, it is among the best.
- 148 4 An allusion to the valley of Las Batuccas in Estremadura; it was almost deserted, though not so unknown as Montesquieu implies.
- 153 7 "Osman": Othman II., deposed in 1618 and replaced by his uncle, Mustapha I.
- 161 4 The reference here is to the galleries of the Palais, which have formed the subject of one of Corneille's first comedies, and, before the Revolution, were the rendezvous of lovers quite as much as of business people.
- 161 30 This shameful and absurd ordeal was abolished by decree of Parliament, dated the 18th of February, 1677.
- 168 Letter XCII is the fourth in the Supplement of 1754.
- 169 21 Allusion to the famous *Lit de Justice*, held on the 2d of September, 1715, in which Philip of Orleans, with the connivance of Mesmes, Count of Avaux, first president of the Parliament, annulled the will of Louis XIV., which instituted the Duke of Maine, natural son of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, commandant of the household, and conferred on him the rights of a prince of the blood.
- 180 4, 5 This chamber was instituted on the 19th of March, 1717, and suppressed a year afterwards.
- 180 11 Adrien Maurice, Count of Ayen, Duke of Noailles, Marshal of France, President of the Council of Finance from the 15th of September, 1715, to January, 1718.
- 187 3 Philip Augustus, threatened by the emissaries of the Old Man of the Mountain.
- 199 19 Philip III., King of Spain. The Kingdoms of Aragon and Catalonia had been united a century before the time mentioned by Montesquieu in a note.
- 201 Letter CXII is the fifth in the Supplement. Most of it was published in the second edition of Marteau, 1721.

- Page. Line.
- 201 8 According to Laboulaye, Charles de Mouchy, Marquis of Hocquincourt, Marshal of France in 1651: one of the characters in Saint-Evremond's celebrated "Conversation of Marshal d'Hocquincourt and Father Canaye."
- 217 3 The Heaven of Chinese Cosmogony.
- 224 11 Prince Eugene, who took Belgrade in 1717 and signed the peace of Passarowitz in 1718.
- 224 Letter CXXV is the sixth in the Supplement of 1754.
- 229 13 Charles XII.
- 229 16 Baron Goetz.
- 239 28 The paper of the bank was worthless, and holders of bills had to pay cash into the Treasury. The depreciated paper retained its nominal value in law, and the debtor could ruin his creditor by paying him with it.
- 235 1 Count of Lionne.
- 269 4 R. P. J., "Reverend père Jesuite": Reverend Jesuit father.
- 271 A chemical miracle by violent fermentation, with smoke, fire, and flame. Mix an infusion of Quesnel with an infusion of Lalande; let it ferment with great violence, bubbling, and thunder, the acids fighting together, and each penetrating its alkaline; there will be an evaporation of burning spirits. Put the fermented liquor in the alembic; you will take nothing from it and leave nothing in it but a *caput mortuum* (a useless drug).
- 271 Lenitive. Take two leaves of the anodyne Molina, six pages of the laxative Escobar, a single leaf of the emollient Nasquez; infuse in four pounds of common water. When half has evaporated, strain and squeeze, and dissolve in the extract three leaves of Baun as a detergent, and three of Tamburini as a purifier. Make a clyster.

Page. Line.

- 272 Against chlorosis, vulgarly called greensickness, or amorous fever. Take four plates from Aretino, two leaves from Sanchez' work on matrimony. Infuse in five pounds of common water, and a pleasant aperient will result.
- 263 25 "Saturn": Louis XIV.
- 272 Letter CXLIV is the seventh in the Supplement of 1754.
- 273 Letter CXLV is the eighth in the Supplement of 1754. It is also found, with some insignificant variants, in the edition of 1721.
- 280 It will be noticed that Letter CXLVII and the seven following are dated earlier than those before; we have respected, however, the order adopted by Montesquieu.
- 287 Letter CLVII is the ninth of the Supplement.
- 288 Letter CLVIII is the tenth of the Supplement, and Letter CLX is the eleventh.

↖

112

NX 000 527 745

ALDERMAN LIBRARY

**PLEASE RETURN TO
ALDERMAN LIBRARY**

DUE	DUE
(6/4/96	

